

THE BASICS OF LIVING

When you were growing up in your home, were there things you knew you could do and things you knew you were not supposed to do?

How did you learn about these? Your parents did not post a list of “do’s and don’ts” on the side of your baby bed. You learn the basic of how to get along in your family by trial and error. You do something that is not acceptable and you were told, “No, no. Don’t do that.” If you did something well, your parent would applaud you. You don’t remember that happening, but that is what typically goes on. We learn from such interactions.

When you started to elementary school, there were expectations of behavior and your teacher would tell you, “You can do this, but you can’t do that.” If you didn’t listen, then you would get into trouble. The same sort of routine happens in high school and you have discovered the “Student Handbook” for the college you are attending. When you graduate and get a job, then there will be an “Employee Handbook.” There will be procedures and policies.

Why do we need such things? Why can’t each person just make up his own rules?

In Moses farewell address to the Children of Israel, he repeated the Commandments God had given him on the mountain nearly forty years ago.

Deuteronomy 5

1 ¶ And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.

1- Hear (Listen), Learn, Follow (Live). A good prescription for health and wholeness in our walk. The word “hear” carries with it the idea of “heeding” or listening with good intentions or simply paying attention. It does you no good to listen if you are not paying attention. If you are in class and the professor is lecturing, what would you be doing if you were paying attention? (Taking notes, underlining in your text book, etc.)

What about learning? Just as there is a difference in hearing and paying attention, there is a difference in paying attention to something and learning something. Learning involves understanding “how” and “why.”

If you learned something, then what could you do with it?

Follow is the idea of doing or living out the principles or precepts of what you have learned.

2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.

3 The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

4 The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire,

2-4 The idea that we do not inherit our relationship with God is stated here. God’s covenant was with those who remained after the passing away of the older generation. The terms of the covenant were still in effect. Application to our situation: The word of God, revealed thousands of years ago, is still true and valid in our time. The word speaks to us and to all who have gone before us. We sometimes think, “That just applies to the Israelites or the early Christians, it doesn’t apply to us since we have this or that.” How foolish! Not one of the Ten Commandments has been repealed. None of the demands and commands of Jesus has been rescinded. The benefits to those who believe and obey should apply to our time as much as they did in the first century.

5 (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;) saying,

5- There is a difference today compared to the time of Moses. Moses acted as their priest and stood between the people and the Lord. On this side of the Cross we have a High Priest in Heaven and are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace. We do not need to fear with the same kind of fear that comes from ignorance of the character of God. We can know Him since we have the Spirit of God in us.

6 ¶ I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

7 Thou shalt have none other gods before me.

6-7 Notice that God identified Himself in relationship to the experience the people had already had with Him. God had already acted in their behalf and next He took action to build a relationship with them starting from that experience. We come to know God through experiencing Him as we obey Him. The Children of Israel had experienced Him as *the God Who*

brought them out of Egypt. If the Children of Israel had not left Egypt, then they would have never known God in this way. The LORD our God is the One who brought them out of Egypt -- He saved them. The One we call Lord is the One Who saved us by His death and shed blood at Calvary. The LORD God Who gave the Ten Commandments identified Himself as the Savior. His Number 1, top priority item for His people is to not let anything come between us and Him. Why would it matter that we have no other gods? The basis of any relationship that is worth having is loyalty. Most indecisions stems from divided loyalty. The result of indecision is inaction. If we are stuck between two alternatives, then we won't be doing much for the Kingdom of God.

8 Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth:

9 Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them:

8-9a Any physical representation of God can limit our concept of His infinite nature. Focusing on objects rather than grasping the spiritual nature of God can open us up to false gods and lead us to destruction. Images also obscure the "spiritual" nature of God. It is therefore absolutely impossible to have an inanimate physical representation of a spiritual being that has real meaning. *for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,*

10 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

9b-10 The nature of God is such that He will not share His unique role. He is the only true God. The consequences of our becoming involved with false gods and religions and false philosophies are that these ideas are passed on to our children and to their children. It is critically important that youngsters learn the truth (rather than a lie) at an early age. The power of an idea gained in the early formative year is truly great. It may take generations to break the cycle of error. On the other hand, learning the truth and then teaching the truth to succeeding generations can yield great rewards for those who walk in the truth.

11 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

11 The Third Commandment (Not take the name of the Lord in vain) tells us of the holiness of God. He is to be revered and held in awe because of His greatness. Misusing the name of the LORD is more than saying God with a swear word. It can be claiming the authority to use His name to accomplish a purpose that is not according to His will.

12 Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.

13 Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work:

14 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

15 And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

12-15 The Fourth Commandment (Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy) instructs us regarding the Lordship of God in our lives. We are to set aside one day out of seven to recognize His ownership, to serve Him and to worship Him in a really focused way. The things we do on the Sabbath set the tone and direction for what we do during the other six days of a week. It appears that the observance of the seventh day of rest was first required of the Israelites when they were given manna. Not only was rest needed from the routine of daily living, but this day of rest was an exercise of faith in that they were to trust the Lord for their provision. The principle had been around for several thousand years since God created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh. The linkage of the Sabbath of rest and deliverance from Egypt is mentioned, first of all in connection with giving a time of rest to their servants. They could related to servitude because of their bondage to the Egyptians. The observance of the Sabbath would also be a memorial to their deliverance from hard slave labor under the Egyptians.

The first four commandments speak to our relationship with God. This relationship is the

key to everything we do. It is the basis for our interaction with Him and our obedience of His commands. It is also the basis for our relationships with other people. The next six commandments address relationships with others. The commandments that deal with our relationship with people are almost universally accepted by various cultural groups throughout the world. Many societies discovered these through trial and error, but God blessed Israel with a word from Himself. The tragedy of our age is that we are rapidly abandoning what God has said and what others discovered to be the right way in favor of our own ideas.

16 Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

16 - Relationship with people hinge on the relationship we have with God. Without that basis we do not have a chance to build the proper kind of relationships with other. However, even with that basis, *how to handle relationships with others* is learned. The usual place for learning this is in the family unit. Our first human relationship is with our parents. Parents pass on important values to their children that will help them get along in life. If what is learned in one generation is not passed on to the next, then each generation is doomed to repeat the same mistakes of the past. There are two possible points of failure with this hand off. The first is that the parents could fail to do what is right and pass along nothing or the wrong information. The second point of failure is that the child could fail to heed what the parent says. Notice that the Fifth Commandment does not tell the parent to pass along the correct values to their children. It was not thought to be necessary since this is a natural (almost instinctive) thing to do.

17 Thou shalt not kill.

18 Neither shalt thou commit adultery.

19 Neither shalt thou steal.

20 Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.

21 Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.

17- 21 The other commandment of not committing murder, not committing adultery, not stealing, not lying and not coveting what belongs to someone else are the bare minimum requirements of having an orderly society. (DO NO HARM)

DEUT 5:17 The Sixth Commandment is the first of five that deals with interpersonal peer relationships. They appear to be list in order of most serious to least serious relative to the consequence to others and society in general. Not committing murder is as serious as it gets when it comes to interpersonal relationship. This is an act that is not reversible. It is not something that you just say, oops! and the victim is OK. Once a life has been taken it cannot be given back.

DEUT 5:18 In God's order for the family, two shall become one in marriage. This unity is broken when adultery is committed. When the unity of the marriage is compromised, then the family which is the basic building block for a stable society is destroyed. This leads to the decay of the very fabric of the social order. We might say that adultery murders the marriage. This may not be as serious as a murder of a person since the marriage might survive the assault but it is so severely damaged as to be dysfunctional.

DEUT 5:19 Stealing that which belongs to another not only deprives the person of what is rightfully his, it also assaults his sense of well being and security. Rather than enhancing the value of the one who steals, it cheapens that person and destroys any sense of worth. Stealing causes a society to become closed and defensive rather than open and caring. It keeps us all from becoming a true community and leads to greater offenses and loss of freedom for all of us.

DEUT 5:20 False testimony against another person can ruin lives and cause pain and loss as surely as stealing possessions from a person. We tend to dismiss the "little white lie" as being acceptable, however, such falsehoods lead to larger lies and eventually can affect an entire nation.

DEUT 5:21 Coveting or envy initially harm only the one who envies. However, if envy

continues it becomes a platform for lying, stealing, adultery, and even murder. It is one of those acceptable (to secular society) sins. However, it is truly one of the deadly sins if it is left unchecked. Many primitive societies operate in such a fashion that people do not reveal their success lest it invoke others to envy or covetousness since envy was associated with the “evil eye.”

It is important to remember that when we commit any of these transgressions that are against peers that they are really sins against God. As David concluded in Psalms 51, “Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned.” If we have attitudes toward other people or toward God that come from any motive other than love, then we fail to accomplish the purpose of God’s commandments. To love God and to love our fellow man meets all the requirements of the law.

22 These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

22- Not only did God write the commandments on stone tablets, He first spoke the words in the hearing of the people. The significance of “and He added nothing more” is not readily apparent. Perhaps it is to tell us that *what God would have us do* is not complicated.

23 ¶ And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders;

24 And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth.

25 Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die.

26 For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?

27 Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it.

28 And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken.

29 O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

30 Go say to them, Get you into your tents again.

31 But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.

23-31 The presence of the Living God is awesome. It brings fear to those who experience it. Mankind’s greatest fear is death. We know that death is inevitable and is the result of sin; consequently, the presence of holiness raises the specter of death. But there is a remedy for this condition.

32 Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

33 Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.

32-33 The remedy is to trust and obey so that we may live and prosper and prolong our days.

God’s requirement for us to do all of the Ten Commandments has not changed for those who would be His people. The additional benefit we have on this side of the Cross is that we have been given the Spirit of God and He is ever present within us transforming us in to the image of Jesus Christ and creating a new heart in us so that we delight in doing His will.