Mirror, Mirror... On The Wall

10 women
10 commandments
10 weeks

A collaborative project of the Pink Collar Club
DEDICATION

To the women of the Pink Collar Club, I dedicate this book. The publication of Mirror, Mirror . . . On The Wall celebrates the one-year anniversary of the Pink Collar Club. Day after day, week after week, month after month . . . you have blessed one another and you have blessed me. I am honored to serve you. May you be richly blessed on the path to purpose.

To the contributing writers of Mirror, Mirror . . . On The Wall, I dedicate this book. You did it! For ten weeks, you were steadfast in the task of producing the first collaborative book project of the Pink Collar Club. The testimonies of your individual journeys through this process have inspired me. Each of you will forever hold a place in my heart. Thank you for your commitment.

To Anne Goodrich of Goodrich Design and Simply Divine Covers, I dedicate this book. Your unrelenting commitment to excellence, your interpretation of my limited articulation, and your generous spirit truly made the process of the details in creating this book a joy for me. I look forward to working with you again in the future.

To Lori Arriaga of Christian Women’s Resources, I dedicate this book. Your dedication to getting our message to the masses has touched me deeply. You are a constant source of encouragement to me and a great supporter and advocate for the Pink Collar Club. I thank you for your willingness to serve as you do. Most of all, I thank you for your loyal friendship.

To Pastor Randolph Nelson of Patchwork Creative Arts Ministry, I dedicate this book. What a lovely surprise to find that you would be preaching a series on the Ten Commandments at exactly the same time that we began the writing process of Mirror, Mirror . . . On The Wall. Each week, I listened and learned. Your words in a Bible study long ago inspired the title.

To the readers of Mirror, Mirror . . . On The Wall, I dedicate this book. This project has truly been a labor of love—a love for God, a love for each other, and a love for you. Ten women have come together to serve you in the ministry of writing. As you read their words, know that you are loved; that we all are children of the same Father.

To my beautiful family, I dedicate this book. Thank you for your patience and support through the long hours of editing and multiple meetings that took time away from you. To my husband, who lovingly refers to himself as the pastor’s wife and to my children, who are the best cheerleaders on this side of eternity. William, you are the man God chose for my life. Tristan, Olivia, and Joseph, you are the wind beneath my wings.

To Jesus Christ, I dedicate this book. Lord, where do I begin? I thank you for turning this “nobody” into a “somebody” in your eyes. I thank you for loving your children enough to establish a set of rules to live by that protect us and honor you. I thank you for using this book project to teach me so many lessons. But, most of all, I thank you for dying that horrible death on the cross so that we could be saved. Lord, I love you. Thank you for loving me. I thank you for loving us.
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INTRODUCTION

IT WASN’T MY IDEA. My intention was to create a book on the promises of God not the Ten Commandments. After all, the promises of God inspire us to persevere through all the trials for we know that we serve a God who keeps His promises. He is the great Promise Keeper. How uplifting! My “head” told me that a book on the promises of God would be embraced. But, the Holy Spirit began doing a work in my heart and it’s from this work in my heart that Mirror, Mirror . . . On The Wall came to be.

Most of the time, God speaks to me in stillness; in the quiet time I give to Him and Him alone but this was different. As soon as I made the decision to create a book on the promises of God, I felt conflicted. Quite frankly, I didn’t understand. It seemed perfect. Who wouldn’t be blessed by reflecting on the promises of God? Certainly God would show favor on a project like this! Or . . . would He? Just as the desire of David’s heart was to rebuild the temple, God had another plan. That job was reserved for his son, Solomon—a noble idea, to be sure, but reserved for another by God.

(Incidentally, as soon as I released doing a book on the promises of God, a gifted Bible teacher who wished to teach a series to the women of the Pink Collar Club approached me. The subject matter? The promises of God. Isn’t He something? But, I’m getting off track. Back to the story.)

One evening I was watching television. I was flipping through the channels and there on the screen was the “heartthrob hunk” of my teenage years—Kirk Cameron. He was walking through the streets of a busy city interviewing passersby with a simple question: Have you ever told a lie? The responses were intriguing.

He followed this question with others pointing back to God and, more specifically, the Ten Commandments. I was amazed at what he was doing. Kirk Cameron . . . I didn’t even know he was a Christian! Let alone, a Christian with a voice who chose to take His message to the masses. My eyes were glued to the screen.

A light bulb went off in my head. (I prefer to think that God shed some light on my heart, too,) I took out my sketchbook and began planning. I was writing ferociously; scribbles everywhere. I immediately remembered a Bible study that my pastor held a few months before. We were delving into the book of Galatians and he related the law with a mirror. I had the title: Mirror, Mirror . . . On The Wall.

The pieces of the puzzle were coming together quickly. Before I knew it, I was done scribbling. And, this is what I found on the page:

Mirror, Mirror…On The Wall

10 Women
10 Weeks
10 Commandments

A Collaborative Book Project of the Pink Collar Club

Well, that summed it up quickly. I had spent months pondering the book project on the promises of God and got nowhere. Then, in a matter of minutes, there it was!

Do you love Him?

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.* (Deuteronomy 6:4–9)

I have learned many lessons through this writing process on the Ten Commandments. For 10 weeks, I have studied, pondered, and prayed them. I have absorbed myself in God’s law and a simple but profound paradigm shift occurred in my heart and my soul.

God loved us enough to establish the Ten Commandments for our protection and His glory.

Simple, isn’t it?

Love. It was from love.

Gone is the image of God with His lightning bolt dictating in a booming voice:

THOU SHALT NOT…!

Instead, I see Jesus; his miraculous birth, his precious life, his horrible death, his glorious resurrection.

I see a Father who loved me enough to give His one and only Son to save me . . . to save you.

And, what does He ask in return?

Love.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all our soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

It is with love that we bring you Mirror, Mirror…On The Wall. In this book, you will find ten devotionals written for each of the Ten Commandments. At the end of each commandment is a page entitled: My Meditations. We include this page with the hope and prayer that you, too, will add your voice to this book.

May you be richly blessed as we have been richly blessed in writing Mirror, Mirror . . . On The Wall.

~ Randee Krumwiede
And God spake all these words, saying,
I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
Thou shalt not make unto 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 water under the earth.
Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: 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;
And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
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.
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:
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, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:
For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.
Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.
Thou shalt not kill.
Thou shalt not commit adultery.
Thou shalt not steal.
Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.
And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.
And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.
And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.
And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.
And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.
Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.
An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.
And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.
Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

~King James Version
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

I
Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

II
Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

III
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.

IV
Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.

V
Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

VI
Thou shalt not murder.

VII
Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII
Thou shalt not steal.

IX
Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

X
Thou shalt not covet.
Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
WHAT IF WE HAD NO OTHER GODS BUT GOD HIMSELF?

BEFORE GOD GAVE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS HE WAS SURE to establish His authority and power when He said: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” (Exodus 20:2) He wants us to remember where we came from and how He took us out of our own bondage to sin. An “awe” factor reminding us of the proper fear and respect we should have of Him.

He then gives us the first commandment to have no other gods before Him. It seems easy enough but let us not be fooled because our time, money, kids and a slew of other things can easily become our gods.

This first commandment means to be devoted to and worship Him only. Showing Him love and affection with our whole being: physically, emotionally and spiritually. Jesus also paraphrased the first commandment when He said “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.” (Matthew 22:37-38)

Our devotion and obedience to His commandments is to be a lifestyle practiced daily.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

And this does not come easy, it takes great effort on our part.

What would the world be like if we all truly had no other gods but God Himself?

We would:

- Be devoted to Him only and learn to truly have a proper fear and respect for Him.
- Gain wisdom to obey the rest of His commands in the Word of God.
- Obey all His commands willingly and it would not be grievous to us.
- Worship Him as a way of life rather then just fitting Him into our lives.
- Seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness in all that we do.
- Keep our lives and priorities in order.
- Love our neighbors as ourselves.
- Have no divisions in the church.
- Have no false religions.

Although this isn’t likely to happen, it does help us to see and consider the importance we should place on this first commandment. Our devotion and obedience to all other commands depends on where we’re at with the first commandment. What a beautiful glimpse of heaven to look forward to when we will all truly have no other gods but God himself.
THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME

“OH GREAT. HERE WE GO AGAIN. WHY DO I NEED TO BE CONCERNED with the 10 Commandments? Weren’t they just a law for people to live by back then? How does this relate to me in the days of fast food drive thrus, Starbucks on every corner, express lanes and self-checkouts? Hurry up and get to the point. I don’t have all day.”

If we are honest with ourselves, these are just a few thoughts that plague our mind when we hear someone start talking about the Ten Commandments.

The truth is we can learn a lot from the Old Testament and the Ten Commandments. The truth is we don’t like looking at the Ten Commandments because it’s like looking in a mirror and seeing all the pimples and blemishes on our faces. It’s like counting all the gray hairs and seeing all those flabby “unmentionable” places. We like to run by the mirror every morning and say to ourselves: “I don’t look that bad today.”

Let’s look at this first commandment from the positive point of view. I should have God (the One True God) first in my life—nothing or no one before Him. Wow. The image coming back at me in that mirror isn’t pretty.

I have a confession to make. I am a Coke addict. I love to drink a cold can of Coke. As a matter of fact, I can drink sometimes up to 6 cans a day when I’m really stressing out. When I get out of the bed in the morning, the first thing I do is reach for my Coke. When I start to feel down, when the bills are piling up, when the phone’s ringing off the hook, when one of the kids is screaming “Mom he’s touching me!” I reach for my Coke. I get pretty cranky when I don’t get my Coke!

Coke has become one of my “other gods.” Maybe for you it’s coffee. Maybe for you it’s sleeping in on Sunday mornings instead of going to church. Maybe for you it’s the embarrassment of a cluttered home keeping you from inviting that friend over who really needs to know God loves her. In today’s world, we have plenty of people and things we can choose to put before God. Most of those people and things are not evil in and of themselves. Drinking Coke isn’t bad. Sleeping isn’t bad. But when we choose to put those things in front of God, and what He wants us to do, we move further from Him.

The truth is we can never live up to the good, just and right ways of the Ten Commandments. That’s why we need Jesus in our lives. He was the perfect example of what we should strive to be. When crowds pushed in on Jesus, he always looked to the Father for guidance. Sometimes he performed miracles. Other times he prayed. Still other times he let his earthly body rest.

So what other gods have you put before God?

What is one thing you can do this week to change that?

Lisa
Dear God, how many times in a day do I let my vision of you be obscured by these other gods, let my mind be sidetracked and my heart turned towards shiny golden calves? In this world that bombards me with images and information I am so easily distracted, mesmerized by the next glittery thing that crosses my path.

Father, help me to drown out the noise that beckons me away from you. Let me see you in my neighbor’s smile and in the crescent moon of a midnight sky. Reveal yourself to me as the leaves dance with delight on swaying branches, or when I feel the warm embrace of a cherished friend.

Let each chore I tackle be not mundane, but a time of reflection on your love and majesty. Dishes can be washed with a heart of grace, emails sent with blessings attached. May I be reminded of you in each person I encounter at a stop light, in the grocery store, or waiting in line for a cup of Chai tea.

Lord, help me to hear your whispers above the noisy gods of this world that seduce my attention. Each minute of life I have the gift of seeing with different eyes, of viewing this existence soaked with your presence, of letting my heart be opened and filled with you.

Years ago, noisy lawnmowers used to make my little daughter rush into my arms crying, “Save me, Mama, save me!” My heavenly father, I want to be a woman who perennially rushes back into your arms when barraged by the lawnmower gods here on earth, a woman whose heart, mind and soul cannot bear being more than a breath away from your embrace.

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” ~Matthew 22:37
I’VE SPENT MOST OF MY LIFE SO LEGALISTIC AND DETAIL-ORIENTED that I’m taking a very different approach to these scriptures. I’m not digging into each Hebrew word and explaining its meaning. Instead I’m using secular songs from the 70’s to contrast God’s Word (and what I believe to be His intent) with how the world thinks and acts. It’s not terribly religious, but I hope it will offer practical ideas about how we can each honor God and His Commandments.

The first commandment and the song title I chose appear at first glance to be in sync. They would be, if the song was addressed to God. However, it is addressed to a lover, a person, not God, and we all know how easily we can transfer our affections from the Giver of the gift to the gift itself.

Because of that, the object of our affection becomes a little “g” god. A little “g” god is anything or anyone to whom we transfer our ultimate allegiance and affection at any time. This “god” is, of course, much smaller and less powerful than the big “G” God. However, at the moment that we intensely focus on the lesser “god”, it inevitably fills our vision and blocks out the Son’s rays.

Put your hand right in front of your eyes.

What do you see?

You see nothing else but a HUGE hand, correct?

Pull your hand away, and you are able to see other things as well. And your hand diminishes in size in comparison to everything else around you. Whatever you focus on fills your vision and therefore becomes very large and immensely important to you—as it is all you can see.

Have you ever heard the phrase “magnify the Lord”? You cannot make the infinite God any bigger but you can focus on Him so intently that He alone fills your vision. You magnify the Lord by keeping Him in front of you (before you) so no other god can ever distract your attention. Remembering the actual size and power of the one true God makes every other object in your vision (and situation in your life) appear rather small in comparison.

There is no better way to magnify the Lord so He completely fills your vision than worship. Being filled with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, imagining the Lord in front of you, speaking His name, reciting His Word—all of these things keep Him continually before you.

So to keep the little “g” gods from filling your vision and fooling you into forgetting how big your God is, stay focused on Him—the real First and the Last—truly your Everything.

_Penny_
GOOD EVENING, FATHER. AS I LIE HERE IN MY BED, I REALIZE that this is the first time that I have spoken to you today. I'm sorry.

_I was with you. Where were you?_

I woke up late and rushed to kiss my husband goodbye. He’s off so early in the morning. I miss him often these days.

_I was with you. Where were you?_

Because I was late getting up so were the kids. They missed the school bus and I had to take them to school. I ran into a lady that I volunteer with and we had a nice chat about the school carnival.

_I was with you. Where were you?_

I came home and got online. I had so much work to do but first I had to return all the emails and phone calls from the women I serve. I looked at the clock to find that my morning was gone. So much to do…so little time.

_I was with you. Where were you?_

I felt a little frazzled so I took a “time out” and read a passage from my devotional book. I almost opened my Bible to look up the Scripture associated with today’s devotional but the phone rang. So I answered it.

_I was with you. Where were you?_

I talked with a friend who needed counsel. We spent so much time that I missed lunch. As I was feeding the dog, I noticed a limp. I called the vet who said I could bring him in right away. I hope he’s okay.

_I was with you. Where were you?_

I took him to the vet and found out that he needs an operation that costs $3000! Where am I going to come up with the money? Should I even consider spending $3000 on a dog? That money could go a long way elsewhere. Still…

_I was with you. Where were you?_

I left the dog at the vet. Came home. Cooked dinner. Hurried to feed my kids. My husband called to say he had to work late in order to finish a project. I don’t know how long he can keep up this pace. He really needs a break.

_I was with you. Where were you?_

I ran the kids to soccer, dance, and scouts. Then came home. Bathed them and put them to bed. Oh, I forgot to say prayers with the kids. Well, they probably remembered. We’ll say a morning prayer together tomorrow.

_I was with you. Where were you?_

Now, I lay in bed. Exhausted. What a day. I’m so glad it’s over. Wait. I better make a mental checklist of what I need to get done tomorrow before I forget. Let’s see…

_I was with you. Where were you?_

I’m sorry, Lord. Did you say something?

_Thou shalt have no other gods before me._

Randee
THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME

UNTIL I WENT TO SEMINARY FOR MY GRADUATE DEGREE, I never paid much attention to the Old Testament. I thought, “It’s outdated and doesn’t relate to today’s culture.” It wasn’t until I actually took my Old Testament class, along with several Old Testament Bible studies that I realized there are a lot of parallels and applications we can make in our current lives.

The 10 commandments were written at the time after God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt. While Moses was seeking instruction from God, the Israelites were building gold idols and worshiping the gods of the Egyptians.

God was angry and disappointed that the people he cherished were so quick to forget the grace and mercy He gave them to bring them out of slavery. If you were to be honest with yourself, are you sometimes quick to forget God in your daily life?

That is what it is like having other ‘gods’ in your life. They can look like busyness, strive for perfection, performance-driven, food, relationships, work, etc. Whatever distracts you from building a more intimate relationship with God would be considered your ‘god.’

Hebrews 8:10 says:
I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

God desires your heart to be undivided. When He is your top priority, rather than everyday distractions, you will be able to see and experience God’s many blessings more clearly.

Tips For Making God Your Top Priority

1. Confess the areas that have distracted you from God. A clean slate will open up doors of opportunities. If you have difficulty identifying the areas, pray for God to provide you with His wisdom and knowledge to bring them to mind.

2. If you are having trouble setting aside time with God on a daily basis, identify the distractions that kept you from Him today. Perhaps those are some of your ‘gods.’

3. Schedule a daily quiet time with God, preferably the same time each day. This establishes God as a priority and less chance for schedules to interfere.

4. Be willing to let go of the ‘gods’ that have been part of your life for many years. Ask God for the wisdom to break the habit that has kept you from true peace and contentment. For example, I needed to give up being performance-driven. By God’s grace, He showed me how to give up the control and let Him lead. My heart was willing to completely surrender after many failed attempts on my part. An open and willing heart will provide you with God’s leading to victory over that area of your life!

Lynn
DO YOU SERVE OTHER GODS?

Nothing.
Nada.
Zip.

Having no other gods before God means being Christ-focused in your whole life. In everything you say and do. Everywhere you go.

Home.
Business.
Church.
Downtown.
Everywhere.

Does Christ touch every aspect of your life?

“If you abandon the LORD and serve other gods, he will turn against you and destroy you, even though he has been so good to you.” ~Joshua 24:20

Do you serve other gods?

“Anything that we keep in our hearts in the place where God ought to have is an idol, whether it be an image of wood or stone or gold, or whether it be of money, or desire for fame, or love of pleasure, or some secret sin which we will not give up. If God does not really occupy the highest place in our hearts, controlling all then something else does, and that something else is our idol.” ~In Devotional Hours With The Bible by J.R. Miller

Obeying God’s Word is honoring our God. Is God a priority in your life?

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” ~Joshua 24:15

Does your life reflect God? Do other people see Jesus in you?

Love the Lord your God
With all your heart and
With all your soul and
With all your mind and
With all your strength.
~Mark 12: 30, 31

Do you have a relationship with God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?

Have you accepted His gift of eternal life?
He wants you to be His child.
Choose Him today.

He is waiting for you.
Unwrap that gift; it has your name all over it.
Eternity won't be the same without you.

Karla
VOICE OF A FATHER

Thou shall have no other God before me. ~Exodus 20:3

Oftentimes children do not realize that all it takes is one bad decision to ruin the rest of their lives. As parents who love our children, we want to protect them from all the evils of the world by setting guidelines and rules.

There is something special about a father’s voice. It demands respect, honor, and worship. It also exudes authority, direction, love, reassurance, strength and safety. This command came directly from the Creator of heaven and earth; Deity and Sovereign of our lives.

The Israelites were in bondage in Egypt for so many years and cried out to God to be rescued and He heard their cry. During this time, many Israelites had lost their knowledge of God's law and had mingled His precepts with the heathen customs and traditions. God rescued them and brought them to Mount Sinai under the leadership of Moses. There, He declared the law of love with His own voice.

I can hear Him reassuring them that He is their Father and not those false gods whom they've been exposed to for so long. I can hear Him telling them…you belong to Me. No one will ever hurt you ever again. I can hear Him telling them…I love you and understands what you have been through. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

I can hear Him telling us that He foresees every foolish thing we are about to do. He expects love and honor from His children. He has a roadmap already in place for us to follow. Yes. I can hear Him telling us.

“And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” ~Jer.29: 13

Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory IF He will fall down and worship him. Jesus response was “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, thou shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall thou serve”.

Worship, like love, is an altitude of the heart. It is a disposition and decision to make God first; to put Him on life’s throne and give Him His place as sovereign and ruler of our lives.

Just like the Israelites we have departed from God's precepts and His laws. Our gods have become our problems, money, clothes, pleasure, home, job, sex, and power. Then God stirs up our nest to remind us who He is and we find ourselves wondering why God has forgotten about us. Even though we repeatedly witness the manifestation of God’s power, we still lack faith.

It is a wonderful thing to see the fullness of God’s love as He teaches us to fly like the little eaglets and the eagle teaching their young.

Like Moses, I say: “Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord in our life.”

Doroty
DETHRONING THE LITTLE “GODS”

FOR GOD, HE IS OUR KING. HE IS OUR CREATOR. He rules over the earth, skies and seas. He should reign supreme in our hearts and minds. Yet, the first commandment is a short and direct reminder for us not to have any other gods before God. A king should not have to mandate of his subjects that they not enthrone any one or any thing before Him. It should be a given. He is the king! Yet, the nature of our King is that He is also a compassionate and just ruler. He allows us – his subjects – the free will to choose.

However, it is precisely our choices that often lead us to displace the King from our lives. We sometimes experience these, often unconscious, coup d’états where we enthrone other things and other people in our lives instead of God. Our energies, our time, and our focus become solely invested in these “others” and these “others” soon become little “god”.

I find that particularly in moments of overwork and stress we are more vulnerable to experience these spiritual disconnects where we lose focus of who sits on the throne. We begin to re-prioritize so as to cater to and finally our service is reserved for these little gods. Before we know it, they establish their little kingdoms in our lives.

Our little gods do not have to be major enterprises or million dollar ventures. They can be just little things. A particular craving for entertainment, continuous participation in idle chatter, excessive surfing on the internet, unrestrained shopping – behaviors that at first seem harmless but soon we cannot do without. Our little gods can also be those people in our lives in whom we constantly invest time and energy but with few or no emotional returns from their part. We are always on the giving end with them but when we need them the most they are nowhere to be found.

Little gods take up most (if not all) of our time, energies and money. Because these little gods are also jealous gods, they demand complete loyalty. They will take up so much space in our lives where there is little room left for the real King. As a consequence, we are always running on empty, feeling overwhelmed, overworked and unfulfilled.

But there is hope. We can dethrone those little gods and give back the ruler ship of our lives to the only supreme God, our Lord and king.

First, you need to be real about those little kings. You cannot conquer what you don’t confront.

You need to take a good look in the mirror of your soul to see what little gods need to dethroned.

Go before your King, today, in humility and humbleness of spirit. Ask for His forgiveness and for help to create a war plan to destroy the controlling grip of any little gods. For your God, He is king, and He will give you the victory.

Norka
AS SOON AS I HEARD THE STATEMENT, MY MIND DRIFTED. I could no longer pay attention to anything else the preacher was saying. I was in shock as I tried to analyze the truth he had just shared: Anything that keeps you away from serving God to the utmost of your ability has become your god.

I used to read that commandment and think of pagan religions in which images made of stone and wood and precious metals are worshipped and adored. In fact, whenever I visited my Hindu friend’s home I would feel really uncomfortable (and a bit self-righteous) because of all the carvings and pictures in her prayer room. But now I was being told that even I might be worshipping other gods and not even know it.

Surely God requires that I live a balanced life. Surely he couldn’t be expecting me to spend every single waking hour doing something for the church. What about my family? My job? My me time?

As I tried to make sense of the statement, I heard a voice tenderly whisper: “How can you serve me in your family, your job and your time alone?”

God wasn’t asking me to neglect everything else; he wanted me to include him in everything. He wants to be a part of my everyday activities, the invited guest at every meal, and the silent participant in every conversation. He wants to accompany me to my classes and to be my exercise buddy during my evening walks in the park. He wants to spend every moment with me, simply because he loves me so much.

How many careless words would go unsaid if only I would remember that God is listening too! I may not have a prayer room with pictures and images of artificial gods, but so many other activities were occupying my time, and my money and my thoughts that they had, inadvertently, become my “other gods”.

It took me a while to figure this out; the speaker was now wrapping up his message. More than anything else, God wants to spend time with you. But you can’t limit your time with God to a few hours in church or a few minutes every morning just before you rush to begin your other activities. I can hear some of you protesting “but I have to get to work!” Then take him with you. What an amazing thought! I can continue to serve God as I go through my daily secular routine because serving God isn’t limited to a ministry; it’s a lifestyle.

Dinorah
My Meditations
Thou shalt not make unto 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 water under the earth. 

Ephesians 2:1-3
THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE.

“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.” — Exodus 20:4 (NIV)

THIS COMMANDMENT IS DIFFICULT FOR ME TO WRITE ABOUT. I’ve been putting it off for a few days trying to relate this to my life today. I mean, after all, I don’t pray to statues of Jesus around my house. The only idol coming to mind are those Buddha statues. You know, the ones with the big bellies you can’t resist rubbing? Idolatry is much more than bowing down to a statue. Idolatry can be the worship of an image, idea or object, as opposed to worshiping God. Here I am running past the mirror again thinking “I don’t look that bad today.”

God is a spirit and spirits are like the wind. You can’t see the wind because it has no shape or form. The results of the power of the wind can be seen and felt. You see branches and leaves moving on a tree. You feel a cool breeze across your face. You see windmills spinning trying to harness the power of the wind. What happens when you try to box wind? Sounds pretty silly doesn’t it. Idolatry is like trying to box the wind. Useless.

We try all the time to put God in a box. We try to put limitations on God. We only worship on Sunday mornings when we go to church. We only pray when our health is deteriorating or tragedy strikes. We only ask God for His blessings not giving Him our faults. God is inside us and in everything around us. He’s everywhere – all the time. God’s thoughts are not our thoughts. We can’t rationalize God’s ways.

Are there areas where you are trying to put God in a box? Do you think you can only talk to Him in a church? Maybe you are holding back a part of you from God. I’m holding back my addiction to Coke (Classic in a can preferably). When I found out I was pregnant with my daughter, I asked God to take away the desire for me to drink Coke. Normally when you drink 5-6 cans a day, you would get a caffeine withdrawal headache. God blessed me with no desire to drink Coke and no side effects. He’s relieved me of it once in my life, and I know He’ll do the same if I ask again. I’m being selfish though and not asking. Maybe you’ve been asking for Him to relieve you of an addiction. Perhaps instead of focusing on the addiction, He needs to show you other things you need to deal with first. Look to God for His answers, and don’t expect them to come nicely wrapped in a box.

Lisa
THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR

Just let me have some more of that moolah,
let me dogpaddle through the cash.
Bury me deep in hills of dough,
while heavenly coinage rains down.
I’ll frolic in the greenbacks,
gleeful, joyful, tossing high the dinero.

Oh yes, the lovely loot,
thrown pedestal high,
how fine the long green looks.
So fine with the Lamborghini and Jaguar,
So fine with the six-foot widescreen plasma TV,
So fine with the platinum and diamond right-hand ring.
Oh yes, the lovely loot, sitting on the sparkling
altar, on draped 800 thread-count sheets.

I want it, I deserve it, I should gift myself.
I need to spoil myself a little. Okay, a lot.
I’m supposed to prosper,
and so God will bless me
with lots of dough, and lots of Pretty Things.
Riches matter, this I know, because
The Media tells me so.

God says just ask and you’ll receive.
I need only to believe.
Luxury beckons, golden calves shine brightly.
And nowadays everyone is treating themselves.
Holy god of believe and receive,
Bless me, bless me, with the Almighty Dollar.

Anne Marie
You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. (God)

**VS**

**BABY I’M-A WANT YOU (BREAD)**

AARON’S GOLDEN CALF DURING THE ISRAELITES’ WANDERING IN THE DESERT always comes to mind for me. I always laugh at how stupid Aaron was to tell God that the calf just made itself out of the gold they melted. However, God just reminded me that I give Him stupid answers as well regarding how this mammoth idol of work that continually looms in front of me got there.

It started out as a way to support myself. Then it became part of my identity. Now, it’s simply an addiction that thoroughly exhausts me. There’s always one more thing to do in my long list of unfinished business.

However, I don’t quite acknowledge that this was MY choice—I tell myself and my family it just “happened” to turn out this way. I know that my obsession with work didn’t just SPRING up out of my normal workday. Somewhere in there, my fear of the unknown and of not being able to pay bills led me to trust more and more in this machine in front of me, and my ability to work it to take care of us financially. I began to want, need and trust in my work more than I wanted, needed and trusted God.

Aaron melted the bracelets and earrings that the people offered up and said a cow popped out of the molten liquid. Well, maybe I have taken my gifts and talents and honest desire to help encourage and enable people to support themselves and told God that this obsession with work just “popped out”. Honestly, I threw them into a mold of my own creation (financial success), and I doubt they are accomplishing what He intended when He gave them to me.

_Givin’ me direction_
_Like a guiding light to help me through a darkest hour_
_Lately I’m a-prayin’_
_That you’ll always be a-stayin’ beside me_

The computer has become my Golden Calf and I stay close to it until I’m sick of it and too exhausted to even turn it on. You can tell what people worship by how they spend their time. There’s no way around it—I’ve been worshipping the work I have carved out for myself in an attempt to make myself feel better about the unknown financial future.

I have to work to support my family, so throwing the computer(s) out is not an option. However, I have to find a way to put God first, my health second, my family third, and then create a place for my work. Only by truly trusting that God will provide for my family will I be able to melt down this Golden Calf of work in my life.

_Penny_
I don't want to move, Lord.

Why?

Because this is my home. There are so many memories here.

You'll always have your memories.

I'm tired of moving. I've moved too much.

You've lived here for eight years. That's a long time for you.

Yes. The longest. I've never lived anywhere this long. I feel safe here. Secure.

You're holding on tightly, aren't you?

Yes.

What does your husband say?

He wants to move into the new house.

Will you follow him?

Father, that's exactly what he asked!

I know. Will you?

Yes. I will give this to him.

Will you give cheerfully?

No.

Why?

Because I want to stay here.

You're holding tightly. Loosen your grip.

Must I?

No. You have a choice.

Okay. I'll try but I need your help.

I'm here.

I don't know if I can do it.

You do your part and let me do mine.

Okay. I'll let go.

Though shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

Randee
WHAT IS YOUR LEGACY?

THERE ARE TIMES AS A MOM, I WONDER WHAT KIND OF MESSAGES I am sending my three daughters about life and God. When I’m on an evening conference call, am I showing them I don’t have time to put them to bed? When I get angry with them about their fighting, what concept of God am I teaching them?

The second commandment tells us not to make anything an idol. If we do, as is stated in Exodus 20:5-6, we are showing the next generations an importance on the temporary, rather than the eternal. But, every generation is responsible for their own sin.

Ezekiel 18:20b states:
The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.

This Ezekiel passage was written during the Babylonian exile of the Israelites. It was their generation that seemed to be suffering the consequences from a terrible king. But God makes it very clear in the entire 18th chapter of Ezekiel that pointing the finger at someone or something else doesn’t take away the sin. You are responsible for your own sin because God calls that free will.

Growing up in an alcoholic/abusive home, I could have chosen a very different life for myself. I am the only one of four children from that environment that chose to heal and approach life from a victorious mindset rather than as a victim. Does that mean that I don’t have days where I act like a product of that childhood environment? No, not at all. It just means that I can stand victorious because of my choice to claim the work of the Cross and what Jesus means to me personally as my Lord and Savior.

Tips on Making (Not Just Leaving) a Positive Legacy

1. Admit that you are human and you will make mistakes.
2. Ask God to provide the wisdom of the areas in your life that need some positive tune-up. Seek scripture.
3. Be patient with yourself and God’s timing to give you victory in the challenge areas of your life.
4. Find an accountability partner(s) to keep you focused on who God has truly called you to be.

Lynn
THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE

IN THE 2ND COMMANDMENT, THE BIBLE IS CLEAR that we are not to carve, sculpt, or engrave any image from all of creation to represent God in worship—we learn that it is wrong to worship anything but God.

Seems simple enough.

God, our Father, wants us to bow down and worship Him . . . the living God.

Today’s world is fast-paced! Have you noticed that when you ask someone, “How are you?”, they reply, “Busy”. It seems that there is not enough time in a day to get everything accomplished. Can you relate to this?

The devil is subtle and he will do everything he can to distract us from living a Christ-centered life.

_The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly._ (John 10:10)

Can things we choose to focus on the most become a god? Things like television, jewelry, business, computer, etc? How can that be? Well, these gods may not be made of rock or gold, but they do manage to take our focus and our worship away from the living God.

So, how do we remain Christ-centered when there are so many distractions? We can have a worship-centered lifestyle by acknowledging God in everything we do. As we seek God more consistently, our lives will be a reflection of Christ.

_So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you._ (Romans 12:1, 2)

Over the years I have learned to be more conscientious of my walk with God. When I choose to keep God first in my life and live with an eternal perspective; it is easier to live a worship-centered lifestyle. But, I have also learned that when my focus and priorities are not in proper alignment, my life is self-centered, lacking purpose and direction.

_There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death._ (Proverbs 14:12)

How about you? Where is your focus? Choose today whom you will serve.

_But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD._ (Joshua 24:15)

Karla
THOU SHALL NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE or any likeness of any thing that is in the heaven above or that is in the earth beneath; or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shall not bow down thyself to them nor serve them, 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, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

The Israelites made a golden calf to worship even as the Lord gave the laws to Moses. God has never been a tangible, visible Being; but always a Spirit. "Now the Lord is that Spirit and where the Spirit is there is Liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:17). How can man be elevated by adoring what is no higher than himself and may be symbolized by his own handiwork?

While vacationing in Costa Rica during Easter, I was amazed by the dedication of the people celebrating Easter in that country. For several days almost everything, including government offices and stores were shut down. The people were extremely steeped in the sanctity of this religious holiday. People walked hundred of miles for ceremonial processions. Some even walked on their knees for miles to the church to bow down to Jesus in His coffin to pay homage. I was so amazed by the loyalty to their belief. I thought to myself, what is stopping us from being that loyal to God? How do you think God viewed them? How do you think God views us?

How could man become so blinded to the power, majesty and glory of the infinite God as to replace Him with graven image and idols? If they could forget their own divine relationship formed in the image of their master as to bow down to these senseless objects, then Satan would have full sway. By leading Israel to this, Satan planned to cause the ruin of the Israelites by blasphemy of Jehovah. He wanted to secure the extinction of the seed of Abraham. If Satan were to destroy this seed, the promise would not be fulfilled and in turn Satan would not be conquered.

Satan planned to destroy Israel and thwart the purposes of God; however, he was defeated again. God did not destroy the Israelites, but some were cut off by their choice to follow Satan; while others humbled themselves and repented, thus they were mercifully pardoned by Jehovah God.

Lord, help us to hold on to the glory of the incorruptible God forever and ever, In Jesus name. Amen!

Dorothy
TRUE WORSHIP IS OUR WAY OF HONORING GOD AS OUR FATHER, our creator, and the ruler of the universe. With worship we express our love and respect for God. It is also our opportunity to give Him praise and honor and offer our lives in total surrender.

The second commandment points us to how God wants us to worship Him. Even in this God provides detailed guidelines, and He actually prohibits us from worshiping Him through images. This means that our worship to God should be governed by faith and not speculation or supposition. We should not have or use anything to replace Him during worship. He goes on to say why, “For I am the Lord, and I am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:5, 6).

Many ancient cultures used images to worship. In fact, whether they were statues made of stone or marble, or exquisitely carved golden images, or the dried carcasses of animals, these images were their gods. They bowed down, worshipped, revered, and offered sacrifices to them. They fully trusted that these images could answer their prayers and even improve their lives.

Perhaps in our modern times the worship of images is not as prevalent in most religions that claim to follow Christ, however we may be also worshipping images. We live in a world where technology practically rules our lives. We go into a fit if we leave home without our cell phones. We cannot imagine going anywhere for more than 48 hours—if there is no internet access. We believe that our lives will suffer greatly without these things, so we devote time and money to the acquisition and use of them.

Have our TV’s, Computers, cell phones, MP3’s Blackberries, etc. become our modern day images? Not only do we seem to spend more time in their company, but we truly believe that they have the power to enhance our lives. Because of this, we give them the type of undivided attention (worship) that only belongs to God.

I once heard a story of a Native Chief who after receiving the message of salvation from an European missionary ordered that every image in his village be broken down. After every single one had been destroyed, he stated: “There will only be one Chief in this village, and He is Jesus.”

Perhaps you and I need to take that determination today, to break down those images in our lives that rob us from time to worship the only true God. The first step is to look into the mirror of our souls to see what things have more of our time and attention. Then, perhaps we need to ask ourselves: “who will be the chief in my life?”

Norka
AS A YOUNG GIRL GROWING UP IN CHURCH, WE USED TO MAKE FUN OF OUR ELDERS. We had nicknames for most of them, and although it might sound like a disrespectful thing to do, we meant no harm. We watched them carefully; we paid attention to their attitudes about worship, their faithfulness, and their treatment towards each other. They weren’t perfect, but the examples of many of those godly men and women inspired us to live lives that glorify God.

Although our congregation was mixed, a good amount of the adults were professionals with very high incomes. As a result, many of them had fabulous cars and homes. I remember clearly when Brother A drove up to the church in his shiny new car. Word spread quickly, and the braver ones pretended to go to the restrooms to be able to get a better view of the new vehicle.

But we never anticipated how that car would change Brother A’s attitude. From the very first time he brought it to church, he developed a strange habit: he would stand up to look out the sanctuary windows every thirty minutes or so. It was unbelievable! It didn’t matter what was going on inside, Brother A would just stand and look out to the window. Whenever he participated on the pulpit, he would position himself in such a way that he would be facing the car while speaking. Of course it didn’t take long for us to find a nickname for him. Thankfully, I can’t remember what it was.

We were amazed at how this man was totally distracted by his new car. A blessing had slowly become a thorn in his flesh! Brother A had made himself a graven image, and this idol interrupted his worship (and the worship of a few impressionable young people who timed him and even made bets about the number of times he would stand!)

Is there anything that’s keeping you from worshipping God completely? What interrupts your private or corporate time with God? Is there any way you can avoid these distractions? God wants us to be still—sit quietly, focus, concentrate—and know that He is God. He demands our full attention.

Dinorah
ARE YOU A TRUE WORSHIPER?

Jesus said: “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24 NIV).

The Second Commandment forbids us to make for ourselves an idol or image in the form of anything to represent false gods or even to represent the true God. This commandment seems fairly easy to obey. After all, we don’t generally erect statues to bow down to and worship them now do we?

But the truth is, our natural mind finds it hard to worship something that is unseen and not only statues but even pictures in our own homes can become an object of worship. If we’re not keeping in step with God’s spirit and the truth of His word, we tend to gravitate towards those things which we can see. Then we justify the use of images to represent the god we worship in order to remind us of Him and make His presence more real to us.

Just as we know faith that is seen is really no faith at all because the bible talks about faith as being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see and that our faith pleases Him, we must also worship the unseen God rather then use images to assist us in our worship because it dishonors Him rather than pleases Him.

Not to say we are to do away with all images, but only to do away with the use of them in our worship. God knew we would find it hard to worship Him in spirit and in truth. He knew we would probably justify the use of images in our worship so He felt it necessary to go on to warn us in the second commandment that:

God is a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generations . . . but showing love to a thousand generations to those who love Him and keep His commands. He wants us to worship Him alone, in spirit and in truth, that is the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. To bow down to and serve Him only, not an image representing Him.

Are you a true worshipper of God who worships in spirit and in truth? A worshipper who has no need for the use of any man made images to assist in your worship? A worshipper who only needs to look at the beauty of all creation around made by God’s own hand in order to worship the true God in spirit and in truth? After all, God is best seen for who He truly is in His creation.
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.
WEARING GOD’S NAME

THE ROOT OF THE WORD VAIN IS THE LATIN WORD “VANUS”, which means empty or futile. How easy it is for any of us to declare ourselves a follower of Jesus, and yet at times behave in ways that refute that very claim. Belief in God means nothing if our hearts aren’t transformed by our Father, if our actions are barren of God’s touch. If the faith we proclaim is empty inside us, we take God’s name in vain.

Sara, a Christian woman I know, went out one evening with a teenage friend to a local beauty pageant. The younger friend, Andrea, knew many of the contestants from high school and was friends with several. I ran into Andrea not long afterwards and asked how Sara had enjoyed the pageant. “Well, she was laughing through most of it,” Andrea told me. “Sara was just making fun of everyone.” Andrea went on to tell me that Sara joked about how untalented everyone was, and made snide remarks about one girl for being fat. What Andrea told me made me heartsick. I know that Andrea’s not sure exactly what she believes, and she left the church she used to attend. Here she was out with someone who could be a mentor for her, a self-professed Christian. What an opportunity it was for Sara to show God’s love, to be an example of charity and kindness, to let Andrea see Christ in her. Instead, this teenage girl witnessed someone being sarcastic and cruel. What emptiness there was in Sara wearing God’s name that night.

In Sara’s story I see myself as well. How many times have I been rude, bitter, gossipy, judgmental, spiteful? How many times have I betrayed the vow I took as a follower of Jesus by acting in ways that go totally against God’s heart and nature? I find each day a struggle to become the woman I know God would want me to be. Only by immersing myself in him will I be able to find my mind renewed and my heart filled with love for others.

Dear Father, I know how many times I have taken your name in vain by not keeping my heart aligned with yours and acting in ways that must grieve you so. Please, once more, forgive me. Please help my mind, heart and soul be filled with you, as once more I pick myself up with skinned and bloody knees, and follow the path to your Son.

Anne Marie
You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

VS

JIVE TALKIN’ (BEE GEES)

VAIN. IN VAIN. VANITY. THEY ALL GO TOGETHER. Ecclesiastes talks about vanity, and basically, it means meaningless or a waste of time.

In the past, I asked myself exactly what that meant in regard to taking the Lord’s name in vain. Bottom line, it means that you don’t speak His name meaninglessly. The Jews don’t even say or spell the name of God, it is so holy to them. They take out the vowels and just leave the consonants. It MEANS something to them to speak the name of God.

Our culture has, for some reason, taken the name of God and decided to use it as an expression of anger, frustration, and aggravation. You’ve heard it (and dare I suggest, said it) a thousand times in moments of exasperation – “Jesus!” And I promise you, it was not meant as a prayer. People, if they knew to Whom they were referring, probably wouldn’t use the name of Jesus when they were disgusted and upset. Or if they did, it wouldn’t be with the angry tone which normally accompanies their outbursts.

That’s why I chose the song Jive Talking. When you use God’s name but are not speaking about Him or to Him, you are Jive Talking. You are saying words that don’t express what you mean, and at times, don’t make any sense at all. I do understand when people are angry, they may want God to smile and damn some person or object, but I honestly don’t think, in that moment, they even realize they are using God’s name at all.

When my children were little, I was convicted by my use of God’s name in rather inappropriate ways. I didn’t want my children to follow in my footsteps (or mouth-steps?), so I had to find a way to change the habit into an appropriate response. Whenever I started saying the Lord’s name uselessly, wrongly, without addressing Him or referring to Him, I would catch myself and add the rest of a Hymn line.

What started out as “Jesus!” turned into “Jesus! (pause) Jesus! How I love thee. How I’ve proved thee o’er and o’er.” Amazingly enough, every time I did it, it immediately dissipated my anger and frustration, and redirected my thoughts to Him. It reminded me that I should speak to Him about the situation, not make senseless and vain outbursts that did no one any good.

I know it’s popular to tell people that Dammit is not God’s last name, but many people don’t have a clue what they are saying when they say it. It’s just a meaningless expression to them. Until the name of God and Jesus means something to them, they won’t consider it something hurtful or rude. The question remains, however, does it mean enough to us to stop using His name in vain?

Penny
I'M ABOUT TO HAVE A FIT, LORD. A real life temper tantrum. I'm so angry I could spit.

Why are you angry, my daughter?

I work with a bunch of heathens. Yes. I said it. Heathens. They don't care about you. They use your name as flippantly as chewing gum. Once the flavor is gone, they spit it out. They know how I feel about you but do they care? No.

Is this about the wrongs done to me or to you?

I'm sorry, Abba. It has become about me...again. But, it didn't start that way.

How did it start?

It started with sorrow. And, gentleness. I would hear them use your precious name in the most inappropriate ways and I would cringe inside. Then I would feel a deep sorrow within my soul and a desire for them to know you.

Yes. I remember. You were displaying the fruit of my spirit...gentleness.

Yes. Gentleness.

What happened?

I took my eyes off of you and lost my focus. I'm angry and you know that I don't deal well with anger.

Do not sin in your anger.

Father, I can bite my tongue until it bleeds to keep from spouting out angry words but there is still sin in my heart.

Yes. From the heart, the mouth speaks.

I know. I don't know how to control my angry heart.

Why are you trying to do what only I can do?

I'm tired, Abba. I'm fatigued. I'm burning the candle at both ends and I'm so tired.

Rest in me.

You make me weep, Father.

Cry...My Love.

Will you carry me for a while? Just for a while?

Yes.

Will you give me the strength that I need to move forward in gentleness?

Yes.

Will you forgive me for my bitter heart?

Yes.

Oh, how I love you. If only they knew you, Abba. If only they knew you.

They will know me by your love.

I need to sleep now, Father. I need to sleep.

Go to sleep, my daughter but remember...one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Rest in that.

Yes, Abba. Yes. One day...

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.

Randee
A DEER IN THE HEADLIGHTS

“GOD BLESS IT!” ARE THE WORDS THAT CAME OUT OF MY MOUTH when I stubbed my toe for the umpteenth million time. I spoke out of anger and frustration with myself instead of letting out a cry.

Throughout the Bible, it is reiterated over and over how God expects you to honor Him in word and deed. It’s easy to justify what you say, as long as there are no swear words, right? According to God’s third commandment, using His name in any other way that does not honor Him is a sin.

There are two ways that the word Lord is used in the Old Testament: One, “Lord” (Kurios) means authority or master. Two, “LORD” (notice all capital letters meaning JEHOVAH) means holiest of holies, Supreme God. As God continued to build the covenant with His people, He wanted to be revered for the miracles and protection He provided His chosen Hebrew nation. Likewise for us, He wants us to revere Him in all His glory that brings music, not clamor to His ears.

My eight year-old Amanda overheard me after I stubbed my toe. She said, “Mom, why do you always say that when you’re mad?” Yikes! Amanda, who is my little accountability partner, stopped me in my tracks to realize that I was using the Lord’s name in vain much more than I cared to admit. What was my response? At first, I gave her a ‘deer in the headlights’ look. But then I said, “You know, honey, I’m wrong to talk that way about God. I will work hard so that you don’t have to hear that again.”

Your words are a reflection of your heart. Have you done a heart check lately?

Tips to keep your heart and words in check:

1. Ask God to raise your awareness when you are using His name in vain. Be willing to ask for forgiveness because it grieves His heart to hear those negative words from you.

2. Are you getting enough alone time with God? Daily prayer and scripture study will help you develop the heart to honor Him daily.

3. Ask God to help you see His hand working in your daily life so that He’ll become more personal for you. The greater the admiration for someone close to you, the less you’ll slip with the negative words.

Lynn
THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN

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. God’s name is the basis of His entire character and although there are many words to describe who God is . . . He is unchanging. My character, unlike God’s, will change depending what I focus on. In order for my character to reflect Christ; I need to seek Him daily.

The Bible says, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:13) When we repent of our sins (calling on God as our Savior and Redeemer), we are welcomed into a covenant relationship with Him. We receive God’s name, the same way that a wife would take on her husband’s name. Just as marriage partners are called to be faithful to one another; God calls on me to be faithful to Him. “You must not have any other god but me.” (Exodus 20:3)

By entering this covenant as a child of the King, it requires that my heart remain pure to Him. I need to respect His name, giving Him the glory and honor that He is entitled to. He is the King of kings and He deserves my utmost love and adoration in my words, my actions and my focus. When I do not keep God as my top priority, I dishonor Him by putting other gods in His place.

“You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or image…” (Exodus 20:4)

When I remain Christ-centered, my life reflects Him; having the authority (the power) in Christ to defeat my enemies.

“Only by your power can we push back our enemies; only in your name can we trample our foes.” (Ps. 44:5)

It is to my benefit to remain Christ-centered to have His power, authority and protection in my life. This commandment holds me accountable for how I reverence God—my words, my actions and my focus. It is a powerful reminder that when I dishonor God’s name or character that I will be held responsible. I will not be found without guilt.

Does this mean that I will not be forgiven?

I believe that if I repent of my sins, that God is faithful to forgive me.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)

Reconciliation to God only comes through repentance of sins.

*Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.* (Matthew 3:8)

One thing for sure, I will be even more conscientious now in sharing God’s name and His character. I will purposely seek to please Him with my life, with all my words, actions and focus.

“Lord, may your name be kept holy. May your kingdom come soon.” (Luke 11:2)

*Karla*
The Value of a Name

Thou shall 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. Exodus 20:7

Most of us work very hard to make a name for ourselves. We do that by becoming a doctor or lawyer, psychologist, etc. Some are already born with names that are worth a fortune. Before our children are born, many of us try to make sure that the names that we have chosen for our children carry value and meaning. A name is something to be proud of. A name should give you confidence, presence, authority and value.

My eldest daughter’s name is Aesha, which means life and prosperity. My second child is Rasheedah which means righteous. These names were carefully picked due to my experiences during my pregnancies. Due to the fact that I had two stillbirths prior to having my first child, it became extremely important to me that my child’s name would be well thought out and special. The name had to symbolize strength and it had to be comforting to me.

Many of us get very upset when someone misspells or mispronounces our name. If our name is so important to us, where then, do we put God’s name? God’s name is not like any other name. His name is powerful and sacred. His name is righteous, and He brings justice upon disobedience. God has various names; one of His names is I Am Who I AM.

I Am the I Am signals the truth that no one defines who God is but God Himself. What He says and what He does is who He is. He is holy and perfect. Holiness is one of the essential elements that are required of His people. God’s name and His character are inseparable. Using His Holy name lightly in a vain empty manner is insulting and degrading. This could be done by perjuring oneself in a court of law or by cursing.

But above all things my brethren swear not; neither by heaven, nor neither by earth, neither pay other oath. But let your yea be yea and your nea be nea; lest ye fall into condemnation. (James 5:12)

Even when an oath is secured by fraud and deception, like the treaty made between the Israelites and the Gibeonites, it was not to be disregarded. The obligation with which one’s oath is pledged if it do not bind him to perform a wrong act—should be held sacred.

This commandment also applies to hypocritical worship, using God’s name in meaningless prayer and praise.

Here Joshua warns “We have sworn to them by the Lord God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them. To this we will do to them. We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we sworn to them”. Joshua 9:19, 20

Dorothy
THE THIRD COMMANDMENT ALWAYS MAKES ME TREMBLE. Not because it is more important than the other nine, but because it’s the one that we so easily transgress. It has become customary in our world to just blurt out God’s name in the most nonchalant way. It really doesn’t matter if the circumstances merit this invocation, we simply use God’s name for the most mundane, and even in the most irreverent situations. Whether we are in danger, we are in shock, we are elated, or we are irritated even: “OMG!” It is the first phrase out of everyone’s lips.

And while the expression in itself has become so popular that its frequently careless pronunciation seems quite harmless, it still does not justify the sacrilege that it carries with it. The fact that God himself, with His own hand, commanded that we not use His name carelessly is a detail that we don’t even think too much about. In fact, God goes on to say that He will not find us guiltless when we choose to do so. In other words, if you know better do better – it’s a “no excuses allowed” kind of thing.

Perhaps we need to take a closer look in the mirror to analyze why it has become so effortless for people of all ages, cultures, and even religions to break this third commandment. The answer might be in the fact that our view of holy and sacred things has become commonplace. There are things that we no longer view as sacred. Marriage vows, sex, love we no longer view these as having moral codes and principles that were originally sanctified by God himself. Instead infidelity and betrayal have become commonplace in our world, so commonplace that our values have become careless.

What has occurred is that in betraying God’s principles we have in turn betrayed Him. His name, that should only escape our lips in reverence and adoration, is pronounced carelessly.

We have forgotten that the name of God is so powerful that the mere mention of it can heal the sick and save lives from eternal doom. God’s name is so mighty that it can lift the heaviest burdens, soothe the deepest pain, change the darkest situation, and break any chain of bondage. Just the mention of His name is full of such divine authority that our human lips must speak it with the deepest reverence and the greatest awe.

In looking into the mirrors of our soul today we need to take the decision to pay more careful attention to our pronunciations. Each time we pronounce God’s holy name does it reflect honor and adoration? Or are our pronunciations of His name so careless that they’ve become sacrilege? May we consciously choose to reflect, from the mirrors of our souls, all the glory and honor that God deserves.

Norka
INTEGRITY

RECENTLY, I FOUND THE MOST AMAZING DEFINITION OF INTEGRITY: being what you say you are—all the time and in every situation. What an excellent description! When we tell the world we’re Christians, we’re not just letting them know that a few times a week we go to a place of worship; we’re taking on an identity that brings along a host of responsibilities and expectations.

Taking the name of the Lord in vain is so much more than swearing and using God’s name as a common expression. It also includes calling ourselves by His name and then living in disagreement with His will.

When I was growing up, I would hear people say “my tongue didn’t join no church”. This expression was usually used when describing circumstances in which they had had to answer back or fight back. How wrong they were! Our Christianity must permeate every single activity that we’re involved in. Our attitude and reaction in every situation should be controlled by our Christianity. We cannot separate who we are from what we profess.

Becoming a Christian means that we’re now followers of Christ and that every single part of us will be used to bring glory to Him. This includes every part of our bodies. Nobody expects Christians to lie back and become somebody’s doormat, but even our reactions in unfair situations need to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Our congregations would have a more powerful impact on our society if each one of us were committed to being what we say we are; if we each decided to stop misusing the name Christian.

I am really hurt by the offhand way in which God’s name is used in everyday conversation, but I’m even more affected by the bad publicity we give the world when we aren’t what we say we are—all the time and in every situation.

Dinorah
ARE MY WORDS AND ACTIONS IN VAIN?

GROWING UP MY OLDER SISTERS AND I WERE ALWAYS TOLD BY OUR MOTHER to never use the name of God in vain. She always told us it was just as bad as cussing but I never quite understood how that could be. After all, I didn’t make a habit of using God’s name disrespectfully, so I thought. It only came out of my mouth when I was amazed or surprised at something so how was that disrespectful? To be honest, I thought I did pretty well in obeying this commandment.

But I realize now there is far more to the Third Commandment then what I thought. I thought God was merely forbidding me from speaking His name in anger in a disrespectful manner. But now I know it is so much more then that. His name isn’t only taken in vain by my careless spoken words but also by my actions. I’m reminded of the well-known saying that says “actions speak louder than words” with the following scriptures:

Matthew 7:21 says, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.” And in Matthew 15:8-9 Christ said to the Pharisees, “These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.” God’s Name is taken in vain whenever we do not practice what we preach and don’t obey the revelation from His Word.

When using the name of God, we must do so in truth as revealed in the Scriptures. Throughout God’s Word, His many wonderful attributes of being eternal, all powerful, wise, loving and faithful, to name just a few, are revealed. He expects us to carefully consider not only our words but our actions as well if we are to be serious about obeying the third commandment, revering His name and giving the respect due Him.

God establishes the importance of having a deep respect for His Great and Holy name when He says “the Lord will not hold us guiltless who takes His name in vain.” After learning the Hebrew word for “guiltless” can be translated “clean” the scripture takes on a more personal meaning to me which could read “The Lord will not hold him to be clean who takes His name in vain.” Therefore, our attitude toward the name of God has everything to do with our spiritual cleanliness.

As Christians we should do as Paul instructed in 2 Corinthians 13:5 to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith on a continual basis. I must ask myself now—do my words and actions honor God in truth so I can worship Him in spirit and in truth—or are my words and actions all in vain?

Lori
THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN

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.

There are many, many scriptures in the Bible that reference the power of the tongue (or words we let slip out). So it really shouldn’t be any surprise that God tells us here not to use His name in vain. Whenever I think about this commandment, I often think of other profanity as well. Before Jesus, I used to have a very limited vocabulary. I would cuss and fuss with the rowdiest of them all. Of course I was just trying to get the boys’ attention (yes, plural boys!). I wanted to stand out from the other girls and having a trashy mouth, definitely set me apart.

After Jesus, I am thankfully a much different story. Jesus accepted me because I came to Him as me. Praise God He didn’t leave me that way! But He didn’t hold anything against me, even as much as I did use His name in vain. I no longer need to cuss like a sailor to get attention. I no longer want the attention which is really a drastic change. I want God to get all of the attention because of all the great things He’s done and continues to do.

I was really embarrassed the other day when I was playing with my church’s women’s softball team. I was in the outfield running to catch a ball and I missed it. One last little push to try and get my body there in time failed. I let a word slip out under my breath (I don’t think it was that loud – but God still heard it). It wasn’t taking God’s name in vain, but it also wasn’t right. In Matthew 12:34, Jesus says “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

I still struggle with controlling my tongue, but I know when I have slips like I did the other night, I need to examine my heart. How has your speech been lately? Have you been using your tongue to encourage others? or beat them down? When you stub your toe in the dark trying to go to the bathroom quietly, what comes out of your heart? Don’t worry if you let words slip out. We all do. Just remember, the more of God you have in your heart, the less room there is for that other useless vocabulary.

Lisa
My Meditations
Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.
I always remember the pastor saying that worship did not include worshipping your pillow on Sunday morning. I never really understood that, especially since I was almost always involved in ministry, and Sunday was a work day, if ever there was one.

Then came the break with the church – a silent but deadly event that almost killed my husband, then a staff pastor, and myself. Filled with doubt about our callings, we eventually lapsed into depression and mistrust with the church. When you called a house of worship “home” almost every day of the week for seven years, it was extremely hard to find another “home” that felt like home.

At first, we traveled around and visited churches, but being charismatic and Pentecostal in practice, we didn’t quite fit into the Southern Baptists churches surrounding us. Since my husband didn’t have formal theological education, he couldn’t just apply for a pastoral position at another church. Eventually, it degraded to just staying home.

It’s amazing how you can slowly rationalize and deceive yourself into believing it is perfectly acceptable to stay home. “I don’t have to go to church to be a Christian.” No, I don’t. But honestly, I’m a really sorry Christian when I am not in fellowship, and under accountability.

Sure, we could let the good times roll - take the boat to the lake, or watch movies, or sleep in, because we work so hard. Or we can get scriptural and point out that Saturday is actually the Sabbath day (the last day of the week), so what we do on Sunday (the first day of the week) doesn’t matter. Either way, we know, deep in our Spirit, that we are wrong and out of the will of God when we avoid fellowship with fellow believers worshipping in the house of the Lord. As hard as it is for us to keep on trying to trust church leadership, we must forge forward, or we are in danger of never moving forward again.

I realize that keeping the Sabbath day holy does not necessarily mean going to Church. However, although salvation may have been a one-time experience, sanctification takes a lifetime. Holiness comes from continually being in the presence of God, on the last day of the week, on the first day of the week, and every day in between. I think honoring God’s word by keeping one day a week to focus on Him and give our poor minds and bodies a rest is a simple and effective way of renewing our relationship with Him, and moving Him back to the center of our lives.

Maybe The Cars were right— let the good times roll. I just want to let them roll inside of God’s will . . . instead of outside of it.

Penny
Is it true, Father?

*Is what true, my daughter?*

That we are to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy...still?

*It's my Word, darling. My Word is always true.*

But, it's the Old Testament. Does it still apply?

*Let me ask you this. Why do you think that I established the Sabbath?*

Another rule.

*Is that how you see me? As the Great Rule-Giver?*

Yes. I mean...no. I'm not sure how to answer that question, Lord.

*I know your heart.*

Yes. Then you know the conflict I have. You seem so different in the Old Testament...so different from Jesus.

*I am the Father. He is the Son.*

But aren't you One?

*Yes. We are One. But I ask you again: Why do you think I established the Sabbath? Go deep.*

Because I need rest? Because I spend so much time “doing” and not enough time “being”?  

Ah...good. Now, deeper. Who do I want you to be?

You want me to conform to the image of Christ.

*Yes. Now, deeper. How do you keep it holy?*

I don’t know. I want to be holy. I strive to be holy. But, I can’t. I can’t be holy. Only you are holy.

Then, *abide in me. I am the vine and you are the branches.*

I don’t understand, Father.

*You will. Listen.*

I am listening. I am listening.

*Listen always. Hear me always and I will direct your path.*

But I can’t always hear you.

*Why?*

Because the storm of life is too loud. My family. My church. My community. My work. It’s so loud.

*Because you spend so much time “doing”, right?*

Oh, Abba. Yes.

*Be still and know that I am God. Give me my day.*

Yes, Father. Thank you. How I love you. Oh, how I love you.

*Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.*

Randee
TOO BUSY NOT TO REST

VINE’S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY DEFINES SABBATH, or the original Aramaic form “sabata” as to cease, or interrupt. The idea is not that of relaxation or refreshment, but cessation of activity. In the time-deprived, activity-driven society we live in, is that possible?

The fourth commandment tells us to keep the Sabbath day holy, meaning we don’t forget to cease from activity. Can you imagine if we all ceased from activity? I would venture to guess there would be a whole lot less stress-related illnesses around the world!

Over the weekend, we had grandparents visit from out of town. My husband and I knew we wanted to do some major landscaping to our house, but didn’t want to take away from our visit with parents. My in-laws were up to the challenge and we wound up working in the yard most of the weekend, while our girls played with neighborhood kids. Do you think we remembered the Sabbath? No. We kept working until it was all done. We relaxed and did some fun things afterwards, but according to God’s original intention of Sabbath, we missed the mark.

Have you ever thought about why it is so difficult for you to cease activity? If you were to take notes for just one week, what do you suppose would fill those 168 hours? Could it be that you are more focused on doing, rather than being? I know I get caught up in that mindset so easily!

Keep in mind that Sabbath day doesn’t automatically mean Sunday. Over the centuries, we have adopted it because for so many, it is church day. I know many people who work on weekends, so they must pick another day of the week for their Sabbath day.

Ways to Establish and Maintain Your Sabbath Day:

1. Think of the day of the week that provides the best opportunity for Sabbath. Be flexible to change the day when needs arise.

2. Be mindful of the legacy you are making. I know kids who are involved in three or four extracurricular activities in any given season. What are parents teaching their kids by stressing their energy levels at young ages? Research has shown there are more kids on antidepressants and other drugs to curb their stressed behaviors than ever before.

3. Going from 0-60 might be too difficult at first. If you look at an entire Sabbath day as impossible, it will be impossible. Start with four-hour increments until your soul thirsts for more time.

4. Think of your Sabbath day as an extended reflection time with God. Aside from your daily quiet times, think of how you want to extend your thanks and prayers to Him. It could become a mini-retreat of silence.” Ask your spouse or a good friend to watch kids while you take time out with God. Or make it a corporate worship experience with your family.

Lynn
REMEMBER THE SABBATH,
TO KEEP IT HOLY

IN THE 4TH COMMANDMENT, GOD SAYS, “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”

What does it mean to ‘remember’ the Sabbath; and how do we keep it holy? The Sabbath has been declared a day of rest for God’s people, a day to be set apart to honor God. We keep the Sabbath holy by dedicating the Sabbath to the Lord.

Then He expands on the commandment, “You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you.”

Why did God bless and sanctify the seventh day? God had completed His work; He rested.

“For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day He rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.”
Exodus 20:11

God made the Sabbath to be a day of quietness and reflection; a time to be still. Why then do we resist this precious gift? The dictionary describes “rest” as,

- Ceasing from labor
- Refreshing quiet
- Solitude
- Letting go of worries
- Silence
- To be quiet or still
- A place that provides shelter

Why do we neglect our need for rest when it is so good for our souls? “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” Matthew 11:28-30

The Sabbath is a gift from God; open it! Obeying the Sabbath and taking time to rest is rejuvenating. God gives us this amazing gift because He knows that we need to rest in Him in order to rely on Him. Do you take time to rest in God? Or do you avoid rest?

Making the Sabbath a priority in your life will declare your dependence on God, esteeming Him with the highest form of honor and praise. Make time to be still with God today.

“Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.” Psalm 46:10

Karla
A SACRED AND HOLY DAY

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY. SIX DAYS SHALL THOU LABOR and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it thou shall not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter; nor thy man servant; nor thy maid servant; Nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. And He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. Exodus 20:8-11

For over forty years the Israelites were reminded weekly of the sacred obligation of the Sabbath by the miracle of the manna. Sabbath was in existence before it was revealed on Mount Sinai, “And madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath, and commandest them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servants”. Nehemiah 9:14

The Fourth Commandment is the only commandment that God reminded us with specifics to remember by telling us to keep His day holy. Why? This commandment is all about worshipping the true God who made heaven and earth. It is about obedience.

God declares through His prophets “My Sabbaths they greatly polluted” (Ezekiel 20:13-24) and this enumerated among the reasons for the exclusion of the first generation from the Promised Land. Yet, their children still did not learn the lesson. Are we worshipping the Creator when we do not worship on the true Sabbath day? Or are we worshipping the beast? Which group do we want to be a part of? Revelation 13:3 states that “all the world wondered after the beast”.

God designed the law of the Sabbath to teach us stewardship of time to contemplate His work. He saw that Sabbath was essential for man, for “Sabbath” means rest. We needed to lay aside our own interests and pursuits for one day of the week that we would be able to fully contemplate the works of God and meditate upon His power and goodness. Sabbath would remind us more vividly of God and awaken our gratitude because all that we enjoy and possess came from the benevolent hand of the Creator.

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showed His handiwork. Day unto day they uttereth speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.” Psalm 19:1, 2.

Are you aware that the final conflict will be over worship? All the inhabitants of Earth will be divided into one of two camps before the end; those who worship the beast and those who worship the true God. Worship will be the issue that will divide the world. All who keep the Sabbath do so as a sign of man’s allegiance to God as long as there are any upon the earth to serve Him.

“I will exalt my throne . . . I will sit upon the mount of the congregation” Isaiah 14:12-14

Dorothy
A TEMPLE IN THE SPACE OF TIME

MY MOST CHERISHED MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD WERE OUR FAMILY PREPARATIONS for the Sabbath. We were taught that Sabbath was the day that God had specifically set apart in His commandments to come into communion with Him. God himself had rested on the Sabbath day, and we were to follow His example.

So, in our home there were preparations to receive this holy day: cleaning, baking, cooking of special meals etc. These activities were not seen as chores but rather as anticipation to a very special space in time designated for worship.

Once the preparations were completed the family would come together in worship, after which we would all sit and enjoy a family meal. During the week we often did not have time for family meals, but we knew that on the Sabbath the family would commune together.

The fourth commandment is a clear indication that God established the Sabbath for man. It was to be a time of spiritual reflection and renewal. God gave very detailed instructions about how we should honor His Sabbath. It is His day. He made it Holy and He himself rested on it. He was clear about not doing any work during the Sabbath—this included the individual, the family and even the stranger that came to visit. In fact, the Sabbath is the second oldest institution on earth. Established since creation—a full 24 hours—it is a temple in the space of time for man to come in total communion with His maker.

Today the Sabbath has become commonplace. It has even separated us as followers of Christ. Some assign its original observance exclusively to the Jews, and view non-Jews who also follow this observance as legalists. One thing is sure; mankind has strayed from God’s original ideal. We no longer see the Sabbath as a holy day. It has become a day in which some of us happen to go to church. We allocate 2-4 hours to church service and once that is over, it’s business as usual—shopping, vain conversations, entertainment seeking, business deals—all of which have nothing to do with worshipping and honoring God.

God knew that we would stray from this commandment and find ways of justifying our disobedience. But He promises that, “If we keep our feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as we please on His holy day, if we call the Sabbath a delight, and the Lord’s holy day honorable, and if we honor it by not going our own way and not doing as we please or speaking idle words, then we will find our joy in the Lord.” And God further guarantees, “and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.” (Isaiah 58:13-14 NIV)

Look into the mirror of your soul today. Have you turned away from the Sabbath? Is it time to get back to God’s original ideal?

Norka
I can still remember the smell wafting though the rooms: popcorn, freshly baked cinnamon rolls, and mom’s famous ice cream pie. A few hours before sunset we would be sent to our rooms to make sure all our toys and books were put away and our shoes were clean and shiny. Our Sabbath undergarments would be laid out along with our frilly Sabbath dresses. Then just before sunset mom and dad would call us into the living room where we’d sit together and sing praises to the Lord of the Sabbath.

Mom would read Bible stories to us and finally we would all repeat our favorite Bible verses and pray. Then we’d sit around the table to enjoy our supper together as a family. What a blessed time!

I recently asked my 12th graders how many of them still sat down with their entire families for a meal. Very few hands went up. “Everybody’s too busy, teacher”, one boy offered “people just don’t have the time for that anymore”.

O! If only we would set out priorities in order and find the time for the truly important things! And if only we would pass on these traditions to our children as we’re told to do in Deuteronomy 6:6, 7 then our world, our society, our churches would be so much better.

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” (NIV)

"You Gave Me a Day"

You rested from the work you’d done
designing beautiful things.
A moment to sit back and enjoy
the wonders new life brings.
You saw that everything was good
and you pronounced it so.
Declaring you Power and Majesty
for all the world to know.

As time goes by they’ve tried to change
your purpose for their lives.
Interpreting in their own way,
confusing us with lies.
But in your Perfect timing
The truth has set me free
You gave me a day to worship;
your private time with me.

You gave me a day to share with you
a covenant of praise
I cherish the moment and call you Creator
because of the Sabbath Day.

_Dinorah_
DO YOU PREPARE FOR THE SABBATH?

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT TELLS US TO: “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” And it goes on to say: “Six days you shall labor and do all your work.” We don’t usually have a problem with the work because it allows us to be in control but the problem lies in where it says “but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work”. We find it hard to allow God to be the sovereign Lord of our time. We know we need to work to earn our daily bread and that our honest and purposeful work is an act of worship but too often we don’t realize just how important it is to set aside the whole day in order to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy where we do no work.

I like to think I welcome this day of rest and do all I can to keep from working on it. As I have been pondering this scripture I am convicted as I realize how short I fall in obeying this commandment. Too often my thoughts, focus and actions are far from God because they are on cleaning and managing my home along with many other things in order to prepare for the upcoming work week. Justifying it because I believe everything we do can be an act of worship to him. Not that doing those things can’t be an act of worship, but that I do not set apart my Sabbath day from the rest of my work week.

God has given us more then enough days to labor and it would be good for us to think of the Sabbath as a vacation from our six day work week. Making it a time to celebrate God’s love and faithfulness with others in public and in private through bible study, prayer and meditating on the Word of God. Making it also a time to do good to others with acts of mercy and compassion.

As a wife, mother, home maker and work at home mom, there is always a great need to be renewed in my spirit and flesh. The one day a week we’re given, I don’t fully take advantage of and realize I must prepare ahead of time for the Sabbath instead of my work week. Reminding myself that I am better refreshed and ready for the upcoming work week if I do so. Therefore I pray earnestly to strive against being easily diverted from preparing and keeping the Sabbath day holy.

Lori
REMEMBER THE SABBATH TO KEEP IT HOLY

‘REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY BY KEEPING IT HOLY. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.’

I feel like I’m looking into one of those fun house mirrors. You know, the kind that make you look all wavy?

During six days, God tells us we should do all our work, but on the seventh day, we should not do any work. Not only should we rest, but our servants, our animals and visitors. Now, I know what you’re thinking – we don’t have servants these days. I don’t know about you, but I absolutely love to eat out. I can’t cook – or at least there are only a couple of things I can cook. On Sundays, we tend to eat out all three meals. We stop on the way to church to pick up some biscuits. We grab some chicken and fries after church on the way home. We order out for pizza on Sunday evenings. My servants are working in those fast food restaurants. They are the pizza delivery drivers. They work in the grocery stores.

I saw a sign the other day that really disappointed me. It was on a bank and said “Now Open on Sundays from 9 am until 3 pm.” I don’t know why it disappointed me so much. I’m part of the problem, not the solution. I give these businesses money on Sunday. Sure it’s easier to run through the drive thru than for me to come home and make a sandwich for lunch (after all that would be me working, right?).

Let’s look at Sunday afternoon naps. They are the best, aren’t they? There is a reason God told us we would need a day to rest. He knows our bodies will wear out. If we constantly work and work, we’re going to ruin our bodies. But we are to remember the Sabbath, to think about God and meditate on the things He’s done for us. Can we do that while we sleep? God didn’t need to sleep. He set apart the Sabbath day to rest and reflect on all that He’d created the other 6 days.

To keep the Sabbath holy would be to set it apart from the common, everyday things we do and to dedicate the day to God. I don’t know about you, but the reflection in this fun house mirror isn’t all that funny. I don’t think there is anything that I do on Sundays that’s any different than another day of the week. I eat out a lot. Some days I take naps. I even go to church on Wednesdays for prayer meetings. So what sets Sundays apart for you? What are some ways you can rest and reflect on God’s greatness? Share your ideas with me because I need all the help I can get!

Lisa
SEEKING SABBATH – A PRAYER

Dear Father,
In the crazy, busy, stressful
Torrents of churning life,
In the storming downpours,
May you be a gentle rain,
A calming brook,
A deep and quiet river within us.
May your voice be a summer’s breeze,
A gentle lapping of waves
on the shores of our soul.
May you fill our hearts with peace
Like the whisper of wind
Caressing the meadow grass,
Like the cricket’s song welcoming twilight.
Amen.

Anne Marie
My Meditations
Honor thy father and thy mother, that they days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.
CONFESSIONS OF A LAWBREAKER

She taught me many things, Lord . . . my mother.
Yes.

Good things and bad things.
Yes. She had much influence over your life.
Perhaps, more than any other.
Yes. Her power was great.
Sometimes, she abused her power.
Yes. And, the other times?
Oh, Father, the good times were so good.

How?
She set me apart at an early age . . . my sister, too.

How?
Despite the circumstances of the day, we knew we were “special” . . . different.

How did you know?
She told us. Through all the dysfunction, many times at the point of breaking, she told us. Over and over again . . . she told us.

She told you what? That she loved you?
Well, yes, but it was more than that. She instilled a “fierceness” in me. She made me believe that if I dug deep enough, I had what it took.

Realistically. I’m surprised to hear you say that. You have criticized her for not supporting you . . . for not believing in you.
Yes.

So . . . how did she make you believe that you had what it took?
By her example . . . then and now. She is a woman of immense strength. A woman who regularly “digs deep”. I watched and I followed suit.

That is your explanation?
No. It’s more than that. It was her connection to us. A braided cord that couldn’t be broken no matter what. That’s what we were, Lord…a braid…my mother, my sister, myself. That’s what we were and that’s what we are.

Yet, there is still conflict.
Yes. The braid is frayed but still intact.

Smooth out the braid, my daughter.
Yes, Father.

She was chosen for you. I chose her for you. I chose you for her.
Yes, Father.

Smooth out the braid.

Honor thy father and thy mother.

Randee
HONORING MY PARENTS CERTAINLY WASN'T IN MY PLAN, but it sure was in God’s master plan! Coming from an alcoholic/abusive/broken home, I often cursed my parents and spewed hatred towards them. My parent’s lack of parenting skills certainly fueled my rebellion towards God and any other authority figure, so why would I want to honor them?

It wasn’t until after I was married that I went through a 12-step recovery program for Adult Children of Alcoholics that I truly learned what forgiveness meant. It was so much easier to blame my parents and the environment I had to live in for how I was turning out as an adult. It was the first time I was able to accept myself and my parents as human beings. When I able to do that, I was able to forgive them.

From the forgiveness flowed the honor.

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

(Ephesians 4:32)

My mother died within six weeks of her cancer diagnosis in 2001. I had the privilege of leading my mom to Christ shortly after breaking the news to her that she was dying. Before she died, she told me a secret she had kept for 33 years that pertained to me. No person should ever have to hear what she confessed. But, by the grace of God, I was able to see her more through His eyes. I let her know I forgave her. Immediately after hearing my words, she drifted off into her semi-conscious state until the Lord brought her home two weeks later.

My children don’t really remember my mother. My father is still alive, but has never been involved in our lives, let alone the grandchildren. I have let my dad know that I forgive him as well. I honor my parents by carrying on ethnic traditions, sharing positive stories, and passing on family heirlooms. I believe the greatest way I have been able to honor them is to forgive them. I made the choice to break the dysfunctional cycle because I want my children to inherit a willingness to honor me and my husband.

How about you? Is it easy for you to honor your parents? Or do you have obstacles?

**Ways to Overcome Obstacles to Honoring Your Parents:**

1. **Denial is more than a river in Egypt.** Admit your negative feelings towards your parents and ask God for forgiveness.

2. **Talk to your spouse, a trusted friend or a counselor about your feelings.** Dig deep to clean out the gunk that has clogged your life and is impacting your life now. If you think resentment and bitterness has not taken root, talk to those who know you well. They might have a different opinion.

3. **Be willing to see yourself through God’s eyes first; seeing your parents through His eyes will naturally follow.** *This will take time.* It does not happen overnight! When I gained that godly confidence that I was God’s precious child, I had a new outlook on who I was and how I approached others.

4. **God can and will give you the ability to honor your parents.** Will you let Him?

*Lynn*
Honor Your Father and Mother

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

In reflecting on this commandment, I realize that I honor my parents more now, than ever before. Why is that you wonder? Let me try to explain…

As children, we are taught to be obedient and respectful of our parents. And let’s face it—that was not always the case! As we grow up, we begin to seek independence, and in trying to assert our own ways; I am sure there that were times that dishonor would came into play.

Did we see our disrespect as a sign of disobedience? I’m sure that we were reminded by our parent(s) at the time that we would not be able to sway their opinion.

Did we see our response as dishonoring? Or did we just think that our parents were “mean”? I know for myself, there were several times that I thought exactly that!

Fast forward a few years…okay, more than a few!

I am now married to Allan and have 2 children. Life is very different then when I was growing up. I am the wife and parent now; I have different responsibilities than when I was a child. I see things from a completely different perspective now! Suddenly, the things that I did not understand completely as a child have become a whole lot clearer.

I am able to relate to the journey called ‘parenting’. I am able to relate because I am a parent now; and from my own experience, I am able to see the joys and the sorrows that are involved in raising your kids. I can understand the sacrifices that my parents made along the way. I am able to understand the reasoning behind their decisions (even when I thought they were being ‘mean’); and how they were looking out for my best interests.

Isn’t it amazing that when we have experienced something for ourselves; we are better able to relate to others and what they have gone through?

I believe God called us to honor our parents because He has placed them in the position of leadership in the home; and by honoring our parents, we honor God.

I have always loved my parents, but over the years, I have learned to honor them the way God intended. I may not agree with everything they say or do, but I can still honor them because they are my parents.

And with obedience of this commandment, comes a promise.

“Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12)

Karla
LONG LIFE ON EARTH

Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the lord thy God giveth thee. Exodus: 20:12

God established parents as the authority figures in the family unit. Children often get their first impressions about God from their parents. Parents who walk in the spirit honestly desiring to follow the guidelines of scriptures, will set better examples for their children, and children who want to please God will respect their parents, regardless of pressure from the world and their peers.

Paul warns children to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and your mother which is the first commandment with a promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth” (Ephesians 5: 1- 4). The Lord rewards those who command their children and their household after Him, that they keep the way of the Lord and do righteousness and justice.

Moses advised us that “We must teach our children diligently about God’s words. We must talk to them when we sit in our houses, when we walk by the way, when we lie down and when we rise up. We shall bind them as a sign on our hand that we will always see them between our eyes.” So when our sons ask us what are the meaning of the statutes and testimonies we will be able to explained to them that the Lord commanded us to fear Him for our good always, that He might preserve us alive.

The experience I acquired as a single parent was awesome. I realized that if you want something bad enough, you can have it through Christ who strengthens you. We discipline our children for a short time as seemed best, we do our jobs with consumed skills, some mistakes and blunders or both. What we did or didn’t do, inevitably have an effect on all of us.

Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due to no other person but God. Himself who has placed upon us, a responsibility for the souls committed to their charge has ordained that during the early years of life, they shall stand in the place of God to their children. And He who rejects the rightful authority of His parents is rejecting the authority of God. Obedience is pleasant to God.

The fifth commandment require children not only to yield respect, submission, and obedience to their parents, but also to give them love and tenderness to lighter their cares, guard their reputation and succor and comfort them in old age. “The eye that mocks his father and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it”. (Proverbs: 30:17)

“He who strikes his father or his mother…or curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death”. (Exodus 21: 15, 17)

Dorothy
THE TOUGHEST JOB ON EARTH

TRUTH BE TOLD, MOST OF US CAN REMEMBER A TIME IN OUR LIVES WHEN we thought our parents were antiquated and old-fashioned. Most importantly, we never understood or agreed with their rules. Why would they make such a big deal about the friends we hung out with, if we were eating the right foods, if we getting good grades—don’t forget curfews and chores. We believed that our parents were just placed on earth to make our lives as children miserable.

What’s more, many of us vowed that when we grew up and had our own children we would never establish such antiquated rules in our homes. We vowed that we were going to be the coolest parents on earth.

But then as life would have it, most of us turned out to be exactly the same type of parents as our parents. Sometimes we are even more protective than they were. One reason is that we realize that this world is even less safer for our children that it was for us. This is all a result of us growing up and realized that parenting is the toughest job on earth.

The well-known African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child” holds a powerful truth. Children are not only the sole product or the sole responsibility of their parents. This is a very difficult concept for us to accept in our individualistic cultures—where every man is expected to survive and excel on his own. However, in these unsafe times no one parent has enough eyes, ears or wits—to monitor their children’s safety. It takes the eyes, ears and wits of the village to protect our children.

A few years ago I met a gentleman who was a member of the Massai tribe. When we met it was his first trip to America. Impressed by what he saw as Americans wealth, he spoke with wonder about all his experiences. I asked him if there was anything at all about America that he found disappointing. His answer was quick “I don’t understand why you put your old people in buildings and keep them away from the family. Who teaches the children about their history?” My Massai friend’s answer was quite thought-provoking. Our grandparents are indeed the depositories of our family histories. They form an integral part of the village that parents need to raise children.

The fifth commandment is proof that parenting is a job from which parents and grandparents never retire. If it were so, God himself would not have commanded us to honor them. Note that there is also no time limit to when we should stop honoring. There are also no if-clauses, the commandment does not say honor our parents if they were not mean, if they treated you right—it commands us to honor regardless. In fact, this mandate to honor has a long-term promise attached to it that is a reward for our obedience: our days will be long.

Look into the mirror of your soul today. Have you honored your parents? Have you taught your children to honor you?

Norka
RECENTLY I READ A STATEMENT THAT SAID: *If God gives you a child, tremble: somebody’s salvation is now in your hands!* I thought about it for a while and then I had to agree. Parenting is no easy feat, and as time goes by it just gets more difficult and more complicated. Children these days seem to be growing up faster and learning about life a lot sooner than we would like them to. Society is continuously bombarding them with powerful ideas on how they should act and behave and the choices they should make, and most of the time there’s little we can do to block the negative influence. I cringe when I hear teenagers disrespecting their parents, and see the parents shrugging sadly, as if it’s inevitable. Moms and Dads are humans too and are bound to make mistakes. But in spite of all their blunders, the command is clear: we must honor them.

At a recent retreat a woman shared the pain she felt when she received the news that her mother, whom she had not seen in years, was dying in another country. Immediately she gathered her things together and rushed to the airport only to be sent back home because her passport had expired a few months before. Because it was the weekend, she was unable to get a new one until two days had passed. By then she received the dreaded phone call: her mother had died. She described the anger she felt at her father for forcing her mother to run away to another country, leaving her nine young children behind. The eldest was only twelve. But then she remembered that in spite of everything, she needed to honor her father. And so in time, she put aside the anger and the pain and invited him to live in her home, where she now takes care of him in his old age. What a beautiful story of forgiveness!

It doesn’t matter how flawed your parents are, you have been called to honor them, respect them, forgive them, and love them. And in the same way, you need to make sure your children learn to honor you.
IS YOUR PARENTING STYLE WORTHY OF HONOR?

As a parent, the fifth commandment speaks to me just as much if not more then it does my children. After all, I have been given the responsibility to train my children in the way they should go. So in order to do that I strive to live according to Deuteronomy 6:6-9 “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts: Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

First we must teach the value of obedience since the concept of honor begins with obedience. When obedience is not taught, lack of respect and rebellion is often the result. We can’t blame television, music, movies or our schools, even though they play a part in the problem. We must realize respect towards parents and those in authority is formed mostly within the home and family setting from the time they are born. Therefore, it is imperative we take our responsibility seriously in order to help shape their lives and not leave it up to others to do so.

Teaching them obedience is only part of it. As we teach our children, we must diligently conduct ourselves worthy of honor and do our best not to fall into the extreme of being too harsh or lenient. In order to gain their honor and respect we must lovingly establish firm guidelines and administer prompt discipline.

It is all too easy to fall into either extreme. I myself fall into the extreme of being too lenient at first - all in the name of what I think is giving them grace. But after much fussing and nagging on my part hoping to gain respect and obedience, I realize it is not working and find myself going to the other extreme.

A few scripture I must continually remind myself of and ingrain in my own heart in order to get me back on track and balanced in my parenting approach are:

Proverbs 13:24 “He who spares the rod hates his son: but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.”

Colossians 3:21 “Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.”

Proverbs 19:18 “Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.”

As we are diligent to teach our children to obey the fifth commandment so they can receive the promise of a long life, they also learn to honor others in authority and ultimately God - putting them on the right path as they mature.

Lori
HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER

“Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.” — Exodus 20:12 (NIV)

This is the first commandment containing a promise from God. He tells us if we honor our fathers and mothers, we will live long in the land God’s given us. That doesn’t just apply to the Israelites. It applies to us today. When I read the Bible, I not only look at the way things are worded, but also what’s left out. God has inspired every single word in the Bible. He did not leave out anything that should have been in there.

As an example, the Bible says simply, “honor your father and mother.” It doesn’t say honor your father if he was involved in your life. It doesn’t say honor your mother as long as she was a nice loving mother who waited on you hand and foot. Honor is to be given based on position not actions. God knew who your mother and father would be. He knew you before He formed you in your mother’s womb. He also knows it is extremely difficult for some of us to honor our parents with the horrible things some of them have done.

I’ve had a great life. I’ve been blessed with two very loving, giving, caring parents. Their actions towards me only made it easier on me to honor them. I still made some poor choices when I was a teenager especially, and didn’t give them the honor they deserved—the honor they deserved not because of anything they’d done, but just because they are my parents.

If your parents are still with you today, count your blessings. If you have a strained relationship with a parent, pray that God will bring healing to that relationship. He can do it. You may have to take the first step in asking for help from God, and letting go of pent-up anger. Honor your parents. Show them respect. Tell them you love them—not because of what they do or have done, but just because they are your parents. God promises you’ll live long if you do, and if you take care of the strained relationships, the life you do live will be much more enjoyable.

Lisa
I WAS GOING TO WRITE SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, but that was before I realized that Sam had robbed us.

I’ve known Sam since he was a little boy, and although I didn’t give birth to him, his mom would often joke about me being Sam’s other mother because he slept over so many nights, and had so many dinners in my home. Sam’s now 18-years-old, and hasn’t lived at home for over a year. I knew when he moved out of his house and dropped out of school and started living with a group of boys that he was also getting involved in drinking and drugs. All I could do was pray for him. I rejoiced just recently when Sam started coming around again, and staying at his mother’s more often. I had heard that he wasn’t doing drugs anymore, though I also knew he had recently lost his job at the bowling alley. We have resources for at-risk kids where I work, and I printed out information for Sam about how we could help him get his high school degree and attend job training programs. I gave him all that information about a week ago when he spent the night. However, I ignored my gut feeling, that nudge of the Holy Spirit, and let Sam sleep in when my son and I left for work and school that day. When I got home I found a note on a napkin from Sam thanking me for all my help. That dispersed any remaining uneasiness I had about him staying here alone for awhile. It shouldn’t have.

Oh Sam, you’re breaking my heart. I’ve done nothing but try to be there for you, give you a meal when you were hungry, a warm bed when you didn’t want to leave, and encourage you through tough times. Remember the twenty dollars I loaned you recently without hesitation? That’s what mothers do. They love and they love and they love. You know what? I still love you. I do. I don’t know if you’re a sociopath and all your words to me are lies, because I know you’re good at lying. I don’t know if you’re just on a rough patch in life and somehow, someday God may get through to that heart of yours. He’s the God of miracles, Sam, and I pray you meet him and find that out. Oh, how I pray for that. Meanwhile I sit here with an empty canister that until last week held all the silver coins that I’ve saved for the two years. It was my emergency fund, and as a single mother, it made me feel a little safer in this world.

You have dishonored me, Sam, and I don’t know where to go with that right at this moment, when the wound is so fresh. But I know why you should honor mothers, even when they’re “other mothers”. Because their love bears a similarity to the way God loves us – it’s a love that always hangs on to hope and a belief that you can change, it’s a love that always wants the best for you, always wants to support and care for you, and give you a warm meal and a soft bed. Even when a mother’s heart gets broken, Sam, the love remains.
Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

VS

**MAMA TOLD ME NOT TO COME**

*(3 DOG NIGHT)*

I'VE ALWAYS LOVED THIS SONG—IT IS JUST SO FUNNY. Here’s a guy who shows up at a party, and things are so wild that he’s scared to death. And, as the chorus points out, his mother warned him not to come.

Now the song may be funny, but it’s sadly true that our parents have more wisdom from their experiences than we give them credit for. They may not understand contemporary technology or cultural slang, but they have experienced humanity first hand for about 20+ years more than you have.

I don’t believe that God is requiring us to do everything our parents say for the rest of our lives. I believe He is pointing out that we are prone to do extremely stupid things. By listening to others’ experiences and mistakes, we can avoid living the disastrous (and sometimes fatal) consequences that come from learning about life the hard way.

Take my husband’s 17th birthday, for example. He spent it on an operating table with a hole the diameter of a metal fence post through his chest. Drinking and driving with friends is something he could have avoided if he wasn’t smarter than his parents.

Now, having children of our own, the shoe is on the other foot. We are, at times, desperate to make sure our children do not repeat our very foolish and often dangerous mistakes. However, we can’t lecture—we have to tell our stories to get the point across. “This is what I did, these were the horrible results, and please, for heaven’s sake, don’t let it happen to you.”

Honoring your father and mother means listening to and learning from the experiences through which they have lived. No matter what stage of life you are in, they will still be 20+ years ahead of you, and will have lived through some portion of what you are going through right now.

They may not understand the frustration of your internet connection going down before you saved an online form. However, they do understand how the best laid plans can go awry. Seek their advice on the things they have experienced and learn from them. You honor them by even asking their advice, and they will truly appreciate you acknowledging their wisdom.

*Penny*
Thou shalt not murder.
WHO IS NOT TO SAY?

A BOOK BY JOHN GRISHAM CALLED “A TIME TO KILL” was made into a movie several years ago. The story told of a father who killed his 12 year old daughter’s rapists before they went to trial. Being a black in the South, this father knew that the two white men would not go to jail for their crime, so he took matters into his own hands. For anyone who is a parent, the question you pondered after seeing the movie was “If that happened to __________(your child’s name), would I ever be compelled to do the same?”

When God gave the commandment “Thou shalt not murder,” He of course, spoke of the act itself, but also lends itself to the thoughts of murder. For many, the act of murder would never occur in their lifetime. But for you, have there ever been any times where you wanted to inflict pain (whether physical or emotional) on someone?

I can recall a time where an alleged friend character assassinated me and proceeded to tell other female leaders in her church so that I wouldn’t be hired to speak at their church again. I saw her do this to numerous women over the years, but assumed that it would never happen to me because of my loyalty to her over the years. I was wrong. My initial reaction was to lash out and tell the leaders of that women’s ministry the truth. I wanted to murder her emotionally like she had done to me. I wanted justice. God very quickly stepped in and showed me through prayer that I needed to pray for this woman who is very broken and in need of professional help. I was able to see her through God’s eyes, instead of avenging eyes. He assured me that her deception would catch up with her and God’s justice would prevail.

Do you ever have times where you want to take justice into your own hands instead of waiting on God’s justice? I believe when it comes to protecting yourself and those you love, you might do or say things that you could regret later. As humans, there is a natural tendency to defend and/or protect what we believe is ours.

Ways to Protect Your Heart from Murderous Thoughts:

1. Choose to respond, not react when someone has done something to hurt you. Count to 20 before saying anything. If you still feel like verbally lashing out at that person, give yourself a time out.

2. Pray,pray,pray! Let God know your feelings. While anger might be the emotion that is surfacing, there are underlying feelings to consider first. For example, this person might have touched on your feelings of rejection, inadequacy, etc. Take those feelings to God as well and see what He wants to teach you through this person or situation.

3. Ask God to give you a willing and open heart to show you how to view this person or situation through His eyes and not your own.

Lynn
THOU SHALT NOT MURDER

Murder is defined as “the unlawful killing of one human by another, especially with premeditated (to meditate, consider, or plan beforehand) malice.”

Almost every day, there are reports that someone has been murdered or has been killed. Hearing this kind of news saddens me deeply. Can we even begin to imagine how much it hurts our heavenly Father, the One whom created life?

I created humans to be like me, and I will punish any animal or person that takes a human life. If an animal kills someone, that animal must die. And if a person takes the life of another, that person must be put to death. (Genesis 9:5,6 CEV) God’s Word says that we must not murder; and if we commit murder, we will be judged. (Matthew 5:21)

But . . . What if we are angry with someone? What about calling someone names? What about cursing someone? Well, what do these things have to do with ‘murder’? Let's find out. “But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.” (Matthew 5:22)

Are you surprised? I was! Now, why do you think God compares these issues to murder? Where does the connection come from? Is it a heart issue?

“When we accept Christ as our Savior, our old life is gone and a new life has begun!” (2 Cor 5:17) God calls us to quit living a life of selfish ambitions and to live a Christ-centered life. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us with God’s authority & direction. God desires for us to be in an intimate relationship with Him.

Unconfessed sin keeps us separated from God; but it also has consequences that we may not even have considered. “But the words you speak come from the heart—that’s what defiles you. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander”. (Matt 15:18,19)

Satan loves it when we hide or ignore the sin in our lives. By keeping sin in the dark, we enable the sin to grow; thus giving Satan a foothold in our lives. Therefore it is extremely important that we confess our sin right away, to help keep out hearts pure and to remain in close relationship with the Father.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1John 1:9)

In closing, life is a treasured gift from God. We are made in God’s likeness and image. We need to keep our hearts and minds on Jesus, then love will prevail…and murder would not be a problem. The world needs spiritual healing.

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. (1 John 3:14-16)

Karla
MURDER IS THE UNLAWFUL KILLING OF ONE PERSON BY ANOTHER, especially with premeditated malice. In Moses’ days you would have been sentenced to the death penalty for taking someone’s life. Another way of carrying out the execution was by stoning, and the body was then impaled on a stake. What would prompt anyone to take another human life? After the fall in the Garden of Eden, the first murder occurred when Cain killed his brother Abel. Jealousy was what drove Cain to murder his brother. In Genesis “God told Cain that his brother’s blood crieth from the ground.”

The Bible declares that all children are, by nature, children of wrath. Murder begins in the heart—one’s thoughts and meditations and proceeds out of the heart. The heart needs to be guarded with care, with the heart one experiences love and hate. The most important duty for anyone is to love God with his whole heart. God is the only one who knows our heart. He knows every evil thought, every evil plot that goes through our mind. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord search the heart and test the mind...” (Jeremiah 17:9, 10) Only God can guard your heart and your mind.

“Whoever harbor anger and hatred against a brother is in danger of God’s judgment.”

Have you ever experienced hatred? I have. It is an energy that you feel. You can see it as well. The person will be talking to you but never makes eye contact with you. He cannot look you in the eye. He feels compelled to tell you he loves you repeatedly, but you know by his actions that he feels hatred towards you because it is in his voice as well. What makes the Lord angry is the effect of evil on man. And because of His unconditional love for us, God, who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace we have been saved.

Passive-aggressive behavior such as the silent treatment or unkind, mean spirited behavior will only generate more of the same. Anger, hatred and jealousy are a sin. These elements can only lead to murder. Why, because it is of the flesh, evil, and not of God.

Just as a gardener cultivates his plot keeping it free from weeds, and growing the flowers and fruits that he requires, so may a man tend the garden of his mind, weeding out all the wrong useless and impure thoughts and cultivating toward perfections the flowers and fruits of right useful and pure thoughts.

Discounting God is dangerous; the great day of the Lord is near and hastens quickly. There the mighty men shall cry out. Zephaniah 1:12

“The peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7

Dorothy
THOU SHALL NOT KILL. FOR MOST OF US THIS COMMANDMENT SEEMS EASY TO OBEY. We would never ever think of doing something to physically harm another human being. Perhaps the only exception would be if we are found in a situation of life and death where our own life is in danger. Otherwise, most of us might never entertain the thought of physically injuring another human being. Therefore, for most, killing someone of flesh and blood is totally out of the question.

But, while we might never consider physically hurting our fellow man, what about emotional damage or spiritual hurt? The old childhood saying says: “stick and stones might break my bones but words might never hurt me”. Those of us who have felt the sting of words know that words do hurt. Some of us can still feel the pain we first experienced from the words that were used to taunt us during childhood. Many adults are to this day still emotionally scarred by the mean words directed at them during childhood.

Besides causing emotional pain, words can also kill. When we use words to slander, insult, humiliate, vilify, misrepresent or hurt a person we commit murder. While the previous might seem like a strong declaration, we need to be real about the fact that when we become instigators or participants of acts such as these we are, in essence, murdering an individual’s character and reputation. We have initiated a cycle of death for that person. A cycle that can be so devastating that without us even being physically present to facilitate or corroborate a story, there is a strong possibility that every person that comes in contact with that story will believe it. If that were not enough, some “hearers” might go as far as to include their own interpretations and versions to the story, adding even more pain to an already slandered name. Every time that story is repeated, fresh blood is drawn from that wound.

The Bible declares that, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue…” (Proverbs 18:21) Our tongue is a weapon, it is a like a two-edged sword, and when used wrongfully it can kill. When we use our tongue to uplift, to honor, to speak truth we can restore life and heal brokenness.

Look into the mirror of your soul today are you using your words to restore or to slay? What steps do you need to take to use the power of your tongue to breathe life into pain and brokenness?
RECENTLY SOME UNRULY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, WITH THE EXCUSE OF PROTESTING against political injustice, took over the beautiful streets of the city of Panama and vandalized stores and cars parked near their schools. This same scenario had occurred a few years before when a mass of students from three public schools ran into the streets and destroyed everything in their pathway. We stared at our TV screens in shock at such a manifestation of demonic disrespect to other people’s property. But this time, the story ended differently for a certain group of out-of-control teenagers that went into a neighborhood with the intentions of destroying the little stores and shops. The members of the community joined together as a mighty army and forced the rowdy students off their properties.

These people had seen the damage that had been done before and they had seen, along with the rest of us, how police, teachers, reporters, and passers-by just looked on helplessly, and they had decided that they were not going to become accomplices.

Of all the commandments this one might seem to be the most difficult to break. Although the media might lead you to believe otherwise, most humans alive right now have never murdered anybody. But what about sitting passively and allowing evil to prosper? There’s not a commandment that speaks directly against this very popular attitude, and yet our flaccid reaction to the evil that surrounds us can actually be one of the reasons why it continues to flourish. Evil thrives when good men and women do nothing.

What can you do when you see injustice in your workplace, your school, your community? I don’t have all the answers, but I can tell you this: as much as it lies within you, you have to speak out against it. When avoidable bad things happen in your surroundings and you remain silent, you are consenting to it. When you retain information from authorities—information that could lead to the capture of criminals, you are a participant in the crime. You might not have been the one to commit the evil act, but your silence sends the clear message that you agree with, and support the illegal deed. Hence, you become a conspirator.

“Do not murder” refers to so much more than taking up a firearm or a knife and snatching somebody’s life. It means that, except for a few extreme circumstances, you need to speak up and call evil by its name.
STOP THE SPIRIT OF ANGER AND HATE!

“You have heard that it was said to the people of long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell” (Matthew 5:21–22).

Jesus felt the need to expand on the sixth commandment because respect for human life ultimately begins in our hearts. The spirit of hate and anger if left unchecked can turn into vengeance and even deadly in our actions if we do not control our thoughts and attitudes toward others. Unfortunately, a prime example of this is in our public schools where violence and shootings seems to be happening more and more these days.

After realizing how easily my own thoughts and attitudes can lead to vengeance, I must take seriously my own role in this matter not only for my own sake but also to set the example for my children and others. Individually we must each stop this spirit of hate and anger in our lives to begin to make a difference in our society.

We do this by writing His laws in our hearts and minds as we meditate on the Word of God. Training our minds to think about what ever is true, noble, right, pure and lovely. Developing our own as well as our children's value systems and shaping our behavior according to the Word of God.

We must also guard against any influence that is contrary to the Spirit of God to the best of our ability. Unfortunately, with much of today’s TV programming, music and games being violent, our hearts and minds are becoming immune to such things making it seem normal to use violence in solving our problems. Therefore, making it all the more necessary to guard against these destructive influences.

Next we must allow God to avenge any wrong doing because it is not ours to avenge. Let us “not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” as it says in Romans 12:21. I think of how often I have offended God yet He continues to love me and not deal with me according to my sins and so I strive to extend the same grace to others.

Last and most importantly we must pray. Pray for the strength of character it takes to do good to those who have done us wrong. Pray to see them as being made in the image of God who simply need His grace just as we need. And pray that we do not let the sun go down while we are still angry (Eph. 4:26) so we do not harbor anger in our hearts that can turn into vengeance the next morning.

Lori
THOU SHALT NOT MURDER

I STORMED OUT OF THE HOUSE, HOPPED IN THE TRUCK AND WENT SPEEDING OFF. Tears started flowing down my face. “I am so stupid. Why did I think his mom would show up on time? Now he’s going to be late. I’m such a screwup. I screw up everything I touch. They’d be better off if I slammed the truck into that concrete barrier separating the highway lanes. Duck could remarry a much better woman than I am. I’m sure she’d be a better wife. Doodle would have a better mother. No one around to mess things up. That’s what I should do. Just turn the truck towards the barrier. Knowing my luck I’d just get hurt real bad and be a bigger burden on my family. Oh Lord, they’d be so much better off if I was dead.”

“Lisa, that’s not up to you.”

“Oh come on God. I screw up everything! They really would be better off without me!”

“Lisa, I’m not through with you yet. It’s not up to you when you die.”

That was me—four years ago. God spoke to me—not audibly, but directly to my heart and in my head. He’s done an awesome work in me the past four years. I’m so thankful He was with me in that truck. I’m so thankful I made it to my destination.

Why am I talking about suicidal thoughts when the commandment is about murder? Because suicide is murder. Murder means the taking of a life before it’s time. It’s all in God’s control—when I was born and when I will die.

These past four years have truly been a gift from God. I’ve celebrated my 10th wedding anniversary with my husband and we’ve grown closer than we’ve ever been before. I’ve seen my daughter go through a lot of changes from pre-school to elementary school. I’ve also developed wonderful relationships online and off-line.

I still screw things up. The house isn’t as clean as it should be. I get lazy and want to eat out. But God’s not through with me yet, and thank God, He’s helped me put things in His perspective—not mine.

Lisa
KILLING ME SOFTLY

‘A healthy spirit conquers adversity, but what can you do when the spirit is crushed?’
Proverbs 18:14, The Message

She didn’t know what it would be like having a mother that didn’t scare you. It gave love a very confusing definition, though she knew she loved her mother. Still, what she learned from the time she was very little was that love came with no boundaries. The hand that held a cold washcloth to your face when you were sick would also suddenly whip across your face when you did something wrong. A smack across the face didn’t leave a mark that lasted very long, but the angry words cut to the quick, cut deeply, and left scars that took forever to heal.

By the time she was five she didn’t want her picture taken with her family because she was ugly. Soon there were other adjectives she learned to assign to herself: stupid, fat, worthless. Once, glibly, she mentioned to a co-worker that her mother always told her she the laziest person she’d ever met. She assumed all mothers said things like that, until she saw the shocked look on her friend’s face. She was an adult then, and she still thought that most people’s first thought before making any move was to wonder what kind of reaction they’d get from their mother. Would she be okay with something or would it make her angry? It was so hard to predict and hardest when the venomous comments and cursing came out of the blue. Surprise attacks made the knife-like words sink deeply in to the hilt.

All those syllables strung together, all those words flung like ammunition shaped her life, gave her a sense of who she was. She believed that you had to be kind always, no matter what, and let people treat you however they liked. She thought that other Christians might love her because they were obligated to, not because they really saw her as someone lovable. When she looked in a mirror she saw every flaw, when she made a big mistake she was tempted to cut herself or put her fist through a window. It’s not that she didn’t come to believe that God loved her just as she was; that was her saving grace.

But still, she wondered who she might have been if her spirit had not been crushed beneath a barrage of cruel words, if she had not had to resurrect herself from an early death.

Anne Marie
"I SHOT THE SHERIFF, BUT I DIDN’T SHOOT THE DEPUTY."

This is a song about someone who killed someone out of anger. He was being harassed by a sheriff, and finally lost it. I can definitely relate to being harassed, and even to losing it. But I feel like the writer of this song is attempting to rationalize what he did wrong—just like we do when we do something wrong.

I think this commandment doesn’t need much explaining, except to point out Jesus’ words that a man’s innocence or guilt for wrong-doing starts with his heart and his thoughts. Most of us probably haven’t killed anyone, but we have thought about it or wished it. Maybe it wasn’t anyone we knew, but it was someone we saw on the news who tortured a child. Honestly, I can’t think of a death cruel enough for someone like that.

But vengeance is mine, says the Lord. It is up to God to repay—not us. When someone wrongs us (or we believe they have wronged someone), anger rises up in us and makes us feel powerful in the midst of our feelings of powerlessness. However, that anger will not accomplish anything, and if we let it rule us, we could end up murdering someone—in our hearts, if not in the flesh.

I was betrayed this week by someone close to me. I could trash her publicly (and my flesh wants to), and find other ways to get back at her, but God keeps whispering in my ear, “Let it go.” He is so much bigger than her, and if He has His hand on me and what I am doing, she will not be able to touch what God is doing.

I know that I can’t wish evil on her and remain in the center of God’s will. I know that I have a tendency to rationalize why this offence is worse than others, and therefore deserves retribution. I know that my desire to reap an eye for an eye is wrong—especially since I know that I will be judged in the same measure I judge others. Would I want to be judged, an eye for an eye, for everything I have done wrong, intentionally or otherwise?

If I sought revenge on her by trashing her privately (oh how tempting!), I could rationalize to God that I didn’t trash her publicly. But that’s the same thing as saying, “I shot the sheriff, but I didn’t shoot the deputy.” If I destroy something out of anger and vengeance, there is no excuse or rationalization for that, and no way to lessen the gravity of my sin. I shall not murder, even within my heart.

Penny
I’ll never forget that phone call those many years ago, Lord.

*It’s good to remember.*

She choked back a sob followed by silence. My heart sank. I knew something was terribly wrong but I never expected to hear the words “I’m pregnant” come from her. I was shocked.

Yes. I remember.

She was only 18, Father. In her first semester of college. She wanted to be a doctor.

*I had different plans for her.*

She had told her family and they insisted on an abortion. This very young woman who advocated the pro-life movement by giving compelling speeches on the debate team was actually considering abortion. Her family had really gotten to her.

*She felt alone. That’s why she called you. Do you remember what you did next?*

Yes. I called in to work and told them I wouldn’t be there. I gassed up the car and headed out for the two-hour drive to her college campus. As I arrived, she was leaving for work. She let me in her dorm and told me to wait. She would be back in four hours.

*Then, what?*

It sounds silly but I went shopping. I had $22 dollars in my purse. I went to the dollar store and bought things for a baby. Rattles, blankets, diapers…baby stuff. I still can’t believe how bold I was.

*Yes. In this case, your boldness made a difference though. What happened next?*

She came home to find me sorting through all the gifts I had for her. She took one look at my gifts and burst into tears. There were few words among us but there was comfort in our silence. We spent the evening being silent together and I left in the morning to head back home.

*You still didn’t know the outcome, did you?*

No. I had no idea.

*But, I knew the outcome.*

Yes. You always do, Father.

*Have you seen him lately? This child of mine?*

Yes. I can’t believe it. He’s 16 years old. He’s so smart, Lord. So gifted. You did a really good job on him.

Yes. *He’s special to me, too.*

I’m sure of that. He serves you, Lord. And, so does his mother. Together, they serve you.

*Yes. My plan is coming to fruition for his life and her life.*

Thank you for being there, Lord. Even if we didn’t acknowledge you. Thank you.

*I will never leave you or forsake you.*

*Thou shalt not murder.*

Randee
My Meditations
SEVEN

Thou shalt not commit adultery.
THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY


Every single one of these words is listed as a synonym for adultery.

Adultery is defined as “the voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than his or her lawful spouse.”

Seems simple enough, until you hear what Jesus has to say.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Matthew 5:27-28

Wow! The commandment just got more complicated. Jesus says adultery is a heart issue.

Easton’s 1897 Bible Dictionary defines lust as the “sinful longing; the inward sin which leads to the falling away from God. (Romans 1:21) “Lust, the origin of sin, has its place in the heart, not of necessity, but because it is the centre of all moral forces and impulses and of spiritual activity.” In Mark 4:19 “lusts” are objects of desire.”

Out of all the definitions for lust that I read; I think Easton’s Bible Dictionary describes lust the best. Sinful longing. Inward sin. Leads to falling away from God. Origin of sin.

Starts in the heart. Self-focused. Objects of affection.

Without our heart, we would not have life; the heart is the center of who we are.

God’s Word says, “Guard your heart above all else, for it is the wellspring of life!” (Proverbs 4:23)

So, how do we guard our hearts when it comes to adultery? How do we keep our hearts pure?

Keep your heart, mind and eyes on Jesus!

Your relationship with God will help you to defeat the power of sin in your life.

So, will just looking to God keep you from adultery (or other sins)?

No. Adultery is subtle and one of the most destructive sins out there.

It affects you and your family.

To build a divorce-free marriage, there are some necessary steps to keep in mind.

You need to build a strong, intimate relationship with your Father God. You need to spend time reading your Bible, learning the Scriptures, and calling on the Holy Spirit to lead you.

When you know what the Word of God says, you can stand upon the rock of Christ; you will make wise choices and you will not be deceived by the devil’s lies.

You need to be aware of your thought life; replace tempting thoughts immediately. Be cautious in your relationships with the opposite sex, always maintaining proper boundaries.

Find a group of trustworthy Christian friends to stay accountable to.

Work on building a marriage with your spouse that fulfills your emotional and sexual needs.

Remaining Christ centered is the key to guarding your heart and your marriage.

But, it is up to you, to be obedient.

Karla
ADULTERY

Thou shall not commit adultery. Exodus 20:13

ADULTERY IS WILLFUL SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH SOMEONE other than one’s husband or wife. It destroys the family unit; it also causes havoc with personal, domestic and national happiness. In the Mosaic Law, when a couple was caught in the act of adultery, both parties were killed. Jesus expanded the meaning of adultery to include the cultivation of lust: “Whoever looks at woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” Mathew 5:28.

Marriage is sanctified by God. Adultery interferes with God’s sacred law; look at David’s affair with Bathsheba, their adultery was a covered up, eventually it led to greater actions, the murder of Bathsheba’s husband. One sin, led to another sin, then violence became a commonplace in David’s household. Yes, his whole family was cursed. In Jeremiah’s time adultery was an epidemic, even the prophets were guilty of it and Jeremiah predicted God’s judgment on them.

One act, yet it encompasses so many other sins: lies, deceit, murder, covetousness, selfishness, stealing and many more. In Moses time people were stone to death. Here is the woman at the well, where her self-righteous accusers, ready to stone her to death and God in His infinite grace and wisdom knew that her accusers were not without sin and He intervened. He stopped them from stoning her, warned her not to do it again and sent her home.

God expects us to avoid perversion and learn how to control our own bodies. When we abuse our bodies we also damage God’s temple. Our father warns us with His promises to trust in Him and serve Him faithfully. The way of sin leads to death, the way of obedience lead to life. There is no other way around this truth. He promised us that anyone that hears His words and puts them into practice, is like a wise man that built His house upon the rock, their foundation is firm.

God’s judgment by the flood and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth as warnings to us sinners today. He turned the city of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes to show us what He does with ungodly people, making them examples for us to see. God did not spare not even one, but yet, He saved Noah, Why? Because Noah was a righteous man. “Already the doctrine that men are released from disobedience to God’s requirements has weakened the force of moral obligation and opened the floodgates of iniquity upon the world. In the family, Satan is at work. His banner waves, even in professedly Christian households.

Lawlessness, infidelity and corruption are sweeping in upon us like an overwhelming tide. “Courts of justice are corrupt, rulers are actuated by desires for gain and love of sensual pleasure. Dishonesty is represented among those who administer the laws”.

“Justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter” Isaiah 59:14.
SAFEGUARDING MARRIAGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT HAS SERVED AS A MORAL GUIDELINE, globally, throughout centuries. To those within a marriage relationship and even those outside of it, adultery is generally viewed as one of the gravest acts of treason. Undoubtedly, when one spouse is unfaithful it can leave deep emotional scars on a marriage that can last for a very long time. Some relationship experts believe that it can take up to 10 years for the wounded partner to experience emotional recovery from infidelity.

Yet, in spite of our knowledge of the moral guidelines that protect marriage as an institution, marriage has always been and continues to be under attack. Our societal views of marriage have caused us to treat it as a disposable relationship. In fact, we prepare and invest more in the wedding event than we do for the marriage journey. Isn’t it any wonder that infidelity is one of the greatest threats to our marriage relationships? Within this reality, marriages that are not built on strong spiritual foundations can easily crumble.

One of the most threatening forms of infidelity in the 21st century is emotional infidelity. Emotional fidelity is simply forming emotionally meaningful attachments with someone that is not your spouse.

Like a silent killer these attachments often begin form harmless relationships between colleagues, neighbors, and friends. They often begin with casual conversations. Technology usually helps to further extend the emotional reach of the attachments - forwarding funny or inspirational e-mails, text messaging or e-mailing little notes. Before you know it the communication moves from the superficial to personal. More is shared - even private aspects of their current marriage relationships. Both are now looking forward to the conversations, the phone calls, the e-mails.

But wait, he/she is just a good friend—someone that we can talk to about anything. They listen and they understand because most likely they are going through the same thing. Soon we share things that we are not sharing with our spouses, and we begin to paint pictures in our minds of what it could be. But, we have never touched, and nothing physical has occurred. He/she is just a friend.

Experts believe that emotional infidelity is the new way to cheat in the 21st century. People are falling in love with each other through emotional sharing although many claim to have never touched each other in a sexual way. Emails, notes, after work dinners, private conversations, and jokes that only the two share, put these relationships on dangerous ground. The danger of this type of relationship is that it opens up the possibilities for further exploration. It is cheating because you have created an emotionally exclusive attachment with someone other than your spouse.

The best way to safeguard against this type of attachment is to be fully aware that it is a possibility. We need to also guard our thoughts from things that are not pure, noble, lovely, admirable—about our spouse (2 Corinthians 10:5). But even in temptation, know that we will never be tempted beyond what we can resist (1 Corinthians 10:13). Our marriages can be safeguarded against infidelity, but it begins with a personal commitment to keeping the flame of love alive, keeping your spouse as our best friend, and being truthful about our feelings.

Look into the mirror of your soul. How safe are your thoughts about your spouse? How safe is your marriage? What will you do to safeguard your marriage from infidelity?

Norka
WITH THE ARRIVAL OF THE INTERNET, THE ALREADY THIN LINE BETWEEN MAN/WOMAN friendships and blatant adultery has become quite fuzzy. A lady I know became seriously emotionally involved with a man who lived in a foreign country. There would be nothing terribly wrong if it weren’t for the fact that they were both married to other people. In trying to convince me of her innocence she wailed: “but we’ve never laid a finger on each other!” True, but they spent long hours flirting online and fantasizing about what it would be like if they were ever to meet in person. Eventually she was able to see the danger of her friendship with his man and after about eight months of an intense affair, they both decided that they needed to behave better. At least this story has a happy ending. But that is not the case of the hundreds of others who have inadvertently become intertwined in ungodly webs.

In another case I know personally, the marriage ended in divorce when one of the two fell in love with an online buddy. How could the blessing of communication become such a curse? And why are Internet relationships so alluring? Who would have thought, twenty years ago, that a stay-at-home mom, who hardly ever left the house without her husband or at least one kid in tow, would meet someone while lazily sipping tea in front of her computer? Who would have imagined that the nerdy husband whose head was always stuck in a book would fall in love with someone he met online in a book-lovers chat room?

There’s no doubt that Satan is out to destroy homes and he’s finding creative non-traditional ways to do so. Our only security comes from putting our marriages in God’s hands and rededicating ourselves to him continuously. At the first signal of interference, we’d do well to fall on our knees in heart-searching prayer, and give God the control of our lives.

I encourage you to vow that you will allow no evil to enter your home through the computer screen, and that you will stay away from those “harmless” friendships that have blurry boundaries and limitations. Refuse to become entangled in the cunning web of deceit that comes as a result of getting our priorities warped.

Dinorah
ADULTERY BEGINS IN THE MIND

IN TODAY’S SOCIETY, IT IS A SAD FACT THAT ALMOST HALF OF ALL MARRIAGES end in divorce. All too often society seeks an illusion in marriage and when that illusion isn’t met, think the grass is greener on the other side. But it is just that—an illusion.

How many enter into marriage with a fairy tale concept that they will live happily ever after? But soon after the honeymoon, find it isn’t at all what they imagined it to be. Rather than face the fact that a marriage takes a lot of hard work, many cling to the illusion that the grass must be greener on the other side. And rather then make a decision to do what it takes to make the marriage work; many begin to entertain thoughts that eventually could lead to adultery and/or divorce.

It is all too easy to fall into this way of thinking. I myself have thought divorce would be so much easier. But by God’s grace, it was then that I realized adultery begins in the mind and that I must begin to control my thoughts. Since, I have worked hard at keeping control of my thoughts by:

First, deciding to cleave to my mate not only in body but in mind as well. Jesus expanded on the seventh commandment in Matthew 5:27-28 saying “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Because adultery begins in the mind before we ever take action, we must learn to transform our mind with only things that are holy and pleasing to the Lord.

Next, by viewing marriage and sex as holy as God does. I began to learn what the Word of God said about marriage instead of what bombards us in today’s entertainment industries. If we are to have any chance at keeping our marriages in tact and honoring to all, we must be strict with what we allow ourselves to watch, read and listen to because much of it is contrary to the heart of God and corrupts our minds.

Last, by believing my marriage is the best place to build character and is exactly where God wants me to be. Where I learn how to love unconditionally, have self-control and forbearance and how to be kind, patient and faithful to my mate. All the while teaching me how to be faithful in my relationship with Jesus. We must allow our marriage to build our characters in order to represent the holy relationship between Christ and His Church.

Let us learn from Solomon’s example who tried to satisfy his every desire but found it all to be futile. Let us also listen to the advice that says to “flee sexual immorality” in 1 Corinthians 6:18 because the consequences of adultery are far reaching into future generations.

Lori
THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

HE WAS YOUNG, TALL AND HANDSOME. HE RESPONDED TO MY FLIRTATIONS in a way that made me think he was interested. I went out of my way at work for just a glimpse of him. I started dressing up a little more, concerned about my appearance, for him. When he looked at me, I knew I was pretty—I knew I was special. Oh, if he would just meet me after work, the things I wanted to do.

I bet most people when they look at this commandment, instantly think of a man cheating on his wife. Well, I am here to tell you: the "I" above was the married me, and the man was not my husband. I made several poor choices during that time. I chose to look at another man. I chose to make comments that I should not have made. I chose to go out of my way just in the hopes of running into this man. He never met me outside of work, and there was never anything physical about our relationship. Still, I committed adultery. Instead of making the choices to go home and make time with my husband after the birth of our daughter, it seemed easier for me to make time at work to flirt with another man. Oh, and did I mention I was saved? I was a Christian, knowing Jesus in my heart, but ignoring the promptings of the Holy Spirit inside me.

I came clean to my husband which was one of the hardest things I've ever done. He couldn't look at me or talk to me for four days. He slept on the couch, didn't eat, and wept. I hurt him so deeply and I had realized what a fool I’d been. I cried and I prayed. I prayed and I cried. I begged for forgiveness from my husband, and I prayed that God would take the unclean desires of my heart and mind away. Oh the power of prayer! Almost immediately, when I went to work and saw this man, he no longer looked handsome. I was sick to my stomach and repulsed just by seeing him.

My weakness has always been men. I judge my value and worth by the reactions of men in my life. I felt good about myself if men looked at me and whistled or made comments that would otherwise offend other women. My husband has never treated me poorly. He's always treated me like a queen. We were going through an adjustment time with a new baby in the house, and we were both often tired and not interested in talking or other marital activities.

I made some very poor choices during that time, but my husband forgave me and we started focusing on each other. God grew us closer together than I ever thought possible. Yes, it took time for that healing and forgiveness. Yes, it was hard for me to humble myself, to admit my mistakes. God is faithful and good. All He needed was my willing heart to begin the transformation.

Lisa
‘The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice.’ John 3:29

This world is so full of enticements. Distractions, cravings and entertainment all provide easy ways for us to let our gaze slip from God, let our eyes be seduced away from The Bridegroom. I work, read, talk on the phone, answer email, watch television, do household chores, and all the while God is patiently waiting for me, anxious for me to enter the sacred chamber of my heart where he resides. Here I am, busily looking outside my relationship with him to find completeness, taking my vow halfheartedly, letting him wait instead of rushing into his arms. I am an adulterer, leaving my God and Savior while I go off and satisfy myself at a whim. Does he yearn for my embrace and sigh at my absence?

Jesus, in his deep love for us, compared himself to a bridegroom, willing to pay a steep price for his bride and then go to his Father’s house to prepare a place for her. At the Last Supper he lifted his cup and declared a new covenant, his blood poured out for us. Can we imagine a love so immense that our bridegroom would give up his life for us? Each day I must pray to wed myself to Christ, my spiritual bridegroom, once again. We the church, his bride, are to go out and demonstrate his love to a hurting world, with mercy, compassion and humility. May I forever be mindful of the covenant I made to follow him with all my heart, mind and soul.

Anne Marie
IF LOVING YOU IS WRONG, I DON’T WANT TO BE RIGHT (BARBARA MANDRELL)

WE ARE A PEOPLE THAT LOVE TO RATIONALIZE. We know what is wrong and what is right, but we can talk ourselves into believing anything, including that there is a reason to do what is wrong and call it right. Hence, the title of the song, “If Loving You Is Wrong, I Don’t Want To Be Right”:

“I have a right to be happy, too.”
“My husband doesn’t even love me, what does it matter?”
“My wife is so busy with the kids and her own life, she doesn’t even notice me.”
“We aren’t having an affair. We aren’t physically involved, we just talk about personal stuff.”
“All we do is fight, this marriage is over anyway. We are just staying together for the kids.”

All of this is rationalization. The worst part is that all of the above sounds so convincing when we are in pain. At this very moment, my husband and I are in what I believe to be a very stupid argument being carried on via angry text messages and yelling on the phone. I am sick to my stomach and so stressed I’m surprised I can breathe. I hate conflict, I strive for peace, and this is a constant struggle in my marriage.

Sure, I have thought about ending it and moving on. I’ve been approached by other men who wanted relationships with me while I was married. I seriously considered them, at my weakest moments. Only my relationship with Christ, and my determination not to dishonor Him, kept me from making very stupid mistakes.

Adultery is never the answer. It’s no more than a bandage on a gaping, infected wound. You may cry at night over the affection or love you are missing in your marriage, but being unfaithful will just add to your agony. You will be so sick and disgusted with yourself that you will either be even more miserable, or you will harden your heart, spirit and emotions to the point that you don’t feel anything, including the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Do whatever it takes to avoid getting emotionally attached to someone of the opposite sex other than your spouse. If you never enter an emotional relationship with them, then you probably won’t go to the next level, which is physical. Protect yourself and your marriage in every way you can, even if it means quitting your job to remove yourself from the imminent temptation.

This is the time when you really have to believe in God’s providence and will, and that He will not put on you more than you can bear. You have to allow Him to use it to continue to mold and shape you into the image of Christ. It sounds trite, but it is the truth. It’s honestly your only option when faced with the temptation of adultery in the midst of an unhappy marriage.

Penny
FORSAKING ALL OTHERS

MY HUSBAND AND I HAVE BEEN A PART OF DEVELOPING THE PREMARITAL MINISTRY at our church over the years. We have mentored couples as they prepare for a lifelong marriage. We have seen young and older couples share stories of parents who cheated on one another, or a first marriage destroyed by adultery.

One of the top two reasons for divorces these days is adultery. It seems that ‘forsaking all others’ in the marriage vows is viewed as an option rather than the norm. As we mentored couples where a parent cheated on the other, the ability for that adult preparing for marriage to trust and respect their future spouse is a hurdle they must overcome in order to truly embrace marriage and the way God intends it to be.

Adultery goes beyond just the act itself. It starts in the mind: an unmet need in your marriage; someone of the opposite sex gives you attention in the areas your spouse doesn’t; you have friends of the opposite sex at work or church, and begin to share marriage problems, etc. In our premarital retreats, we call these distractions marriage intruders. Anything that gets in the way of you and your spouse connecting physically, spiritually or mentally is a marriage intruder. I have seen how something as innocent as having children become a huge marriage intruder because the focus and energy is on raising the kids, rather than making the time to build a strong, solid marriage.

One of the best legacies we can pass on to our children is how to be a godly child of God, spouse, and parent.

SAFEGUARDS TO PROTECT YOUR MARRIAGE:

1. Identify the “marriage intruders” in your life. Have your spouse do the same. Talk over your lists and develop an action plan to insure these intruders are either removed or put in proper priorities (children, work, etc.).

2. Date, date, date! At the very least once a month, preferably bi-weekly. If your excuse has been “can’t afford a babysitter, or don’t know any babysitters” check with your local MOPS group and get referrals from other moms. Talk to your youth pastor for a list of responsible teens he or she knows. Have a babysitting co-op where you swap with other parents to care for kids.

3. Connect with your spouse daily. This doesn’t mean reporting out details of what happened during the day. Go deeper. A flower needs sun and water on a daily basis in order for it to grow. If it doesn’t get those elements, it will die. The same is true with your marriage. Tend to it daily and see the beautiful results that will blossom!

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7 (NIV)

Keep your life and marriage focused on God. It will guard your heart to not stray from your love of Christ or your spouse.

Lynn
The first time I read the book, I felt unsettled; resistant to the message within.

Why?

I don’t know. It just felt like the voice of the “flower child” was returning. You know... peace, love, and harmony.

*Peace, love and harmony are good things. They come from me.*

Yes. I know. I was drawn back to the book for a second read. Was that you, Abba?

*The book speaks extensively on the assault on the heart of women. It’s a message you needed hear again.*

Why? I already know of this assault. I know it all to well.

*So do they... those whom you serve. But, there was something more I wanted to you learn. What unsettled you the most?*

Viewing you as my lover. It struck a chord for only a heartbeat. Then, I heard the clashing of cymbals. I couldn’t hear the beautiful chord anymore. Only loud, crashing noise of the cymbals.

*I brought you the harmony of a beautiful chord and you chose to hear the clashing sound of the Enemy. Why?*

I didn’t know it was the Enemy. I didn’t know.

*Now, you do.*

Is it true? Are you my Lover?

*I AM Love.*

Yes, Lord. But...are you my Lover?

Yes. I am your Lover. Your Bridegroom.

Oh, Lord... then I am an adulterous woman. No, Lover, no... not adultery, too. I cannot bear it.

*I bear it for you. Release it. Ask.*

Lover, forgive me for my adultery. Forgive me for my cheating heart. Forgive me, Lover, forgive me.

*Now... come back to me.*

Yes, Lover.

*I am yours... yesterday, today, and tomorrow.*

*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

Randee
My Meditations
Thou shalt not steal.
LABOR AND EARN

Thou shall not steal. (Exodus 20:15)

Because of Adam’s heeding to Eve’s voice and disobeying God’s order, the Lord cursed the ground for Adam’s sake. “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread”. (Genesis 3:19) Work, to me, means the physical and mental activity directed toward a task. It means you labor and you earn your livelihoods. If someone were willing to steal, he would also be willing to lie and kill to get what he wants. Man as created was intended to work. One of his primary tasks in the Garden of Eden was to work the ground. Although work was established as a blessing, it became a curse as a result of the fall.

There are so many forms of stealing. Thievery is when someone takes what does not belong to him, whether it is by force or by deception. Robbery can be exercised by taking something that does not belong to you. Another name is plagiarism, which means that you present another person’s work or answering as your own in order to get credit for it. Slander or defamation is the ruining of one’s good name. When you scandalize someone’s name, you are taking what is rightfully his or hers. You have accused them of what they have not done and smeared their character and their conduct. Deception can be another form of robbery, because you have manipulated others and told less than the truth for your personal gain.

As a manager in a large corporation, I have seen so many forms of lies in the course of my interactions with people. I have seen employees lie for just about every thing, then try to justify their lies. Any form of lies, is stealing. Falsifying time sheets, charging the company time you did not work for and calling in sick when, in fact, nothing is wrong with you is stealing.

Leaving your children by themselves to go work two and three jobs to compete with the Joneses is stealing time from your children. Now they are forced to grow up by themselves with no one to discipline them.

An abusive or unfaithful spouse that leaves his wife for another woman or even walks away from the marriage has deprive his wife and children their economical social, educational right.

Kidnapping and slavery is another form of stealing, this has an impact on a person’s freedom.

Withholding your tithe is another form of thievery, because you delay God’s work from going forward and this deprives some individual of the opportunity to have a better life. God will bless you then curse you for disobeying him.

If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it and sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed. (Exodus 22: 1, 2)

Dorothy
FAMOUS 18\textsuperscript{th} CENTURY MEXICAN STATESMAN BENITO JUAREZ once said, “Respect for the rights of others brings peace”. Simply put, to not have respect for another person’s physical, mental, emotional and spiritual faculties is to rob him or her of their peace. This is such a profound thought.

How many times and in how many ways have we robbed others of peace? Too often we believe that God has given us some type of moral authorization to impose our beliefs on others. But while Jesus was radical for His time He never ever forced his beliefs on people. In fact, He was always clear about pointing out the truth, but gave everyone the right to choose. One classic example in the Bible is the rich young ruler. The young man knew what he had to do, but he obviously wanted a justification for his disobedience. Truth be told, he must have had some contact with spirituality before to have that internal moral compass. He knew what was right from wrong.

We live in a world that seems to be producing a generation of youth and children who seem to lack internal moral compasses. They lack a clear understanding of what is right or wrong. Therefore, anything goes. How do we lead them to understand what is right, while still respecting them?

Do we beat them over the head with our beliefs? Do we teach them a better way by our own example? Often our youth are turned off by our own double standards. We preach one thing but do another. Or we are selective as to who and how we apply certain rules. The reason for our double standard is that it’s so much easier to talk the walk, and not walk the talk.

This could be the reason why tend to have so many contradictory definitions of what peace is. Peace while not happiness can contribute to happiness. Peace is not present if there is oppression, injustice or inequality. But, while peace is not present if hostility reigns, sometimes conflict that will open a path to resolution can bring peace. Furthermore, the Bible makes a strong promise to all those who will always seek peace. They are the ones that God will knight with a distinct honor, “\textit{Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God}” (Matthew 5 : 9)

The eighth commandment does not specify what exactly we should not steal. Therefore we often attribute this commandment to the stealing of material things. But stealing is the act of taking away from another anything that is his or her right as a child of God to have.

Look into the mirror of your soul today, are you stealing someone’s peace by trampling on his or her rights? What can you do from today onward to respect the rights of others and in so doing bring peace on earth?

\textbf{Norka}
TIME THEFT

WHENEVER WE READ THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT, WE IMMEDIATELY THINK it refers to people who break into stores, or hold-up innocent passers-by, or the infamous hackers, or people who infringe copyright laws, or those who refuse to tithe. Technology has also brought along many new ways in which we can “get away” with being dishonest. But have you ever stopped to think that when you purposely ignore your health you are also guilty of stealing?

According to the dictionary, to steal means to take what belongs to another. The Bible tells us clearly that our lives belong to God, and so do our bodies. These lives have only been given to us for us to glorify God through them. We are the custodians—the keepers of the body. For that reason it’s our duty to make sure that it’s kept in good working conditions for the Owner.

When we deliberately fuel our bodies with foods that are unhealthy, when we neglect our need to sleep, when we can’t find the time to exercise, when we work too much, when we allow stress to eat away at our sanity, when we hold on to grudges—we are mismanaging the gift of life—we are stealing from our Creator. Every time we become sick because of our own carelessness, we are robbing Him of valuable time that could have been used to serve Him.

God loves us beyond anything we could ever imagine. He wants us to prosper and have good health because when we are healthy, we are able to spend more time with Him learning from Him, enjoying His company, and sharing with others all the wonderful things that He has done for us. Don’t miss out on a blessing because you didn’t take care of the temple entrusted to you.

Just like stealing from a mere earthling is a serious crime, in the same way stealing from God has its consequences. Purpose in your heart that you will love and respect the life given to you, and in so doing, you will carry out the plans that God has for each of your days.

Dinorah
ARE YOU DECEIVING YOURSELF?

THEFT OCCURS WHEN ONE IS DISCONTENT WITH WHAT THEY HAVE and covet their neighbors possessions. But to obey this command is to respect the property and possessions of others and to conduct business in all honesty and fairness.

Many of us may think, “this commandment is easy to obey” but this commandment is broken again and again by respectable businesses, men and women in our communities and even ourselves if we are to be honest through the following ways:

- Employees often rob their employer by taking their pay even though they did not give a full honest day’s work. Instead of spending their time doing work, they spend it on taking care of personal matters and even use company supplies for their personal use.

- Coworkers often encourage others to slack in their work and discourage them from working hard because it looks bad for them and only raises the standard expected for everyone else.

- Businesses are often deceptive in their advertising and cut corners, not giving as high of quality products as they lead the customer to believe they would get in order to put more money in their pockets.

- Students often cheat on tests and school work in order to get a better grade then what they worked for.

- People are often unfaithful in the stewardship of what God has given them by being wasteful, neglectful, spending unwisely and not giving back to God.

Have you been deceived into thinking these things are not really stealing since they seem to be largely practiced and acceptable in society?

Let us take heed of Paul’s admonition in Ephesians 4:28: “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.” Let us not be deceptive but instead gain material possessions through our honest and hard work only.

Then, let us deal with one another in love as Matthew 7:12 says, “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.” A thief concerns himself only with what he can “get” but as followers of Christ, let us concern ourselves with others and “give” to those in need.

Next, let us “learn the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.” As it says in Philippians 4:12, being satisfied with what we are given and setting our hearts on things above.

Last but most importantly, let us pray so we can be sure to do away with any deception in our own hearts that society corrupts our hearts and minds with.

Lori
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

Most of the time when I think of stealing it is of robbers breaking into a bank, or someone sticking some merchandise from a store under their coat. To steal is to take something without the owner’s consent. Have you ever stolen? I know I have. Nothing as major as millions of dollars from a bank. I’ve never gotten caught stealing, but I have stolen before. My guess is you have too. Have you ever brought home some pens from work? How about a stack of paper for your kids to draw on?

“But I worked overtime that week."

“I’ll make it up—I’ll put in an extra hour or two."

“They’ll never miss it. It’s such a big company."

You know, when we begin making excuses trying to validate our actions, chances are, they are not actions we need to be taking. Our children’s generation has a bad case of entitlement. Our children are growing up thinking that the world owes them certain things—they should have the latest video games or the coolest gadgets. It’s not a far jump to think “if the world owes it to me, then I’m just going to take it.” We have to be very careful with the examples we set for our children. They not only listen to what you say, they also watch your actions. Don’t think for a minute that anything gets by them either! Err on the right side. If you have doubts about whether or not you should be taking something (sometimes called borrowing) then don’t do it.

Lisa
THE CRADLE WILL FALL

Words slash through the night,
Each syllable spills haltingly
   From reluctant lips.
Old memories, ancient pain,
   Finally unraveling,
Spinning its web around us,
   Binding us together.

I watch as she labors
And gives birth to horror
While the world freezes
And shatters in a darkened room.
Now impotent to heal wounds
   With a mother's kiss
I wrap her in my arms,
   Rocking her,
   Rocking her,
   Rocking her.
Trying to mend with my tears
The fabric of a childhood torn away.

Anne Marie
You shall not steal.

VS

**TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN**
**(STEVE MILLER BAND)**

THIS SONG BOTHERS ME BECAUSE IT DOESN'T SEEM TO THINK THERE is anything wrong with taking the money and running. The problem is, many other people don’t see a problem with it either. I think that, as with the 7th commandment, rationalization plays a huge part in why people do this.

Have you ever taken a pen or pencil from work? Ever accepted extra change from the cashier? Ever received 2 of something for which you paid once? You wouldn’t normally call these incidents stealing, but aren’t they? Keeping something which isn’t yours when you know it isn’t yours, but rightfully someone else’s.

There are so many subtleties in life, it is hard to differentiate at times. How about hiding your income by receiving cash under the table and not reporting it to the IRS? Is that stealing? When I cleaned out my desk at my last job, I found some stuff that I know they will never use, and was tempted to bring it home with me—but it wasn’t mine. I just couldn’t put it in the bag.

Now, not everyone has such a legalistic, easily triggered sense of guilt. It could be because I come from a Jewish family, and guilt is the first thing you learn. (I’m a converted Jew.) But I think we need to be less blasé about taking what doesn’t belong to us, and more sensitive. Little eyes are watching us.

Once my husband was at a restaurant and got soda in his water cup. I was horrified, because our kids were there, and I didn’t want them to think that was okay. It ended up that my husband was a friend with the owner, and he had given my hubby permission to drink as much soda as he wanted. So it wasn’t really stealing, but it didn’t look that way on the outside. Appearances mean a lot, so we need to avoid any appearance of evil.

I just challenge you to review your definition of stealing and make sure you do not have any sticky finger habits that may not land you in jail, but could ruin your testimony in front of little eyes. Don’t take from others what you wouldn’t want taken from you, either personally or as a business owner.

*Penny*
CONFESSIONS OF A LAWBREAKER

He stole her innocence, Lord, and I hate him for it.

_Forgive him._

I can’t. Not now.

_If not now . . . when?_

Her life is a mess. She’s so angry. He stole her joy.

_Forgive him._

She has such a wall built up around her. He stole her trust.

_Forgive him._

Her marriage is breaking up. He stole her ability for intimacy.

_Forgive him._

I can’t. The damage is done. I can’t let go. She’s so broken.

_I will heal her._

When, Lord? When?

_When she allows me in._

What if she doesn’t? Is it her fault? She was only a child.

_The answers will come . . . for her and for you. Do not fret._

I love her, Lord. I love her. I want to protect her. Oh, God, I didn’t protect her.

_I am her protector. I will vindicate. Allow me to vindicate. Forgive him._

That would take a miracle, Lord. To forgive him, it would take a miracle.

_I am the God of miracles. Do your part and let me do mine._

I’ll try, Father. Don’t leave me alone . . . please. I can’t bear the weight.

_Release it to me. I will carry the weight. Find peace in me._

Yes, Lord. With you help.

_I am your Helper. Do not forget._

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you.

_Thou shalt not steal._

Randee
‘So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.’ (2 Corinthians 4:18)

I do some contract work for a global career transitions firm. One of my paychecks revealed an extra day of pay when it was a day I had called in sick. I immediately emailed my boss and told her the dilemma. She was very appreciative of my honesty and integrity. News traveled quickly to the other project manager who called a few hours later to set up another day of work to compensate for the extra day. She said her faith was restored that there are still honest people in the world.

Was I tempted to not say anything to my boss? Thankfully, only for a moment. The temporary gain could have cost my contract with the company. I thought more of showing Christ than anything else. The result of this choice not to steal has lead to a permanent contract position with the company and the opportunity to share Christ with others.

Ways To Avoid The Temptation To Steal:

1. Count the cost. You may be able to ‘get away’ with it in front of people, but God sees your tainted heart. Confess and repent for a changed heart. God will provide more chances to test your heart.

2. Evaluate if there is a particular area you are more tempted than others (i.e. money, other peoples’ ideas, etc). Ask God to help you trust Him to provide in this area.

3. Ask others to hold you accountable if you struggle in an area. This will help transform your mindset faster than trying to overcome the temptation on your own.

Lynn
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL

IN THINKING ABOUT THIS ARTICLE, IT WAS EASY FOR ME TO REMEMBER A TIME that I stole something; it was one lesson that did not need repeating.

I was probably around the age of seven or eight. We lived in a small community; every Saturday, on “town day”, we would all get ready as a family and spend the afternoon running errands and shopping. I loved going into town; it was a highlight for me as a kid. We lived in the country, so going into town every weekend was a real treat! I loved to look around at all the things that the store had to offer. I was always intrigued about something . . .

I remember how desperately I wanted that teeny, tiny notebook, but I have no recollection of why that book was so important to me. I just knew I had to have it. Every week, the notebook became even more beautiful in size and color but it was not the perfect price! Since I did not have the money to buy it, or the courage to ask my parents for it; the desire of owning this notebook grew and grew.

You know what I’m going to say . . . don’t you? Yes, I ended up stealing the book; I was overcome with temptation. I just had to have that book. I made sure nobody was watching me. My heart was pounding like crazy. My hands were sweating. My mouth was dry. I could’ve been caught, but that was not a big enough red flag for me to reconsider my actions. When I thought I could get away with my actions, I quickly stuck the book in my pocket. There, all done! I was happy! Or wait . . . was I happy? I wasn’t happy. I felt ashamed. My tummy started to turn. I felt like everyone knew what I had done. I kept my hand in my pocket all the way home, lightly fingering the pretty little pages.

What had I done? The joy from my prized possession was suddenly flooded with remorse. I knew I had done wrong. I couldn’t enjoy writing or drawing in the notebook because every time I looked at it. I was filled with regret. I don’t remember when, or if I told my parents, but the important thing is: I remember. I learned a very valuable lesson that day on honesty and integrity. Thou shall not steal became a reality for me that day—a reality that has stayed embedded in my memory and heart as a reminder of God’s commandment.

My testimony of this commandment is just one example. Stealing comes in many shapes and forms. Think about these examples:

- Tithes & Offerings
- Burglary
- Shoplifting
- Picking pockets
- Plagiarizing
- Buying stolen goods
- Tax fraud
- Stealing from your workplace
- And more . . .

Our excuses are as numerous too. Robert I. Khan, in his book The Ten Commandments for Today, writes that there are a hundred ways to steal but only one way to be honest. Now, there’s food for thought.

Karla
Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
FALSE TESTIMONIES

WHEN WE READ OR REPEAT THE WORDS OF THE NINTH COMMANDMENT: “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor”, immediately we think of untruths that can mislead or even hurt another person’s reputation. Yet, we seldom consider that with our lives we can also bear false witness. Our lives are loudspeakers of who we are. Without saying a word, just by our actions and choices, we provide others with evidence of our culture, education even economical background. In the same way, our lives also give witness to others of our spiritual and moral values. This is the reason why it is said that the most powerful sermon that one can ever preach is a life that is well lived.

Everything that we do, our choice of clothing, music, words, friends, our business deals—everything tells others of the God that we claim to serve. Our attitudes in the workplace, in our neighborhoods, within our community actually testify of our loyalty to our God. Therefore, when our lifestyle and our choices are not harmonious with our allegiance to God we bear false testimony, and we dishonor Him.

Every tree is known by its fruit. An apple tree cannot bear mangoes—however delicious they might be. The apple tree’s natural destiny and purpose was to bear apples and that alone it will do. Therefore, we cannot say that we are followers of Christ and our lives bear other fruits, “Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” (Matthew 7:20)

It is a solemn thought that without saying a word, just by living our lives, we can mislead others and tell falsehoods about Christ, Christians, and Christianity. Honesty, integrity, respect, kindness, compassion, self-respect, humility, self-control, civility, and tolerance these are but a few of the spiritual values that we bear as fruits from day to day. In all our dealings and interactions with the world at large our real fruits come out as natural products—they cannot simply be pruned away. These are the values that people witness in us as representations of Christ’s character. These are the values that testify of the greatness of the God we serve.

Let us look into the mirrors of our souls today. What sermons are we preaching with our lives? Are our fruits a testimony of our Creator and Lord? Do our choices and our words bear testimony of our loyalty to Him? Is our testimony false or real?

Norka
GOSSIPING HAS BECOME SO POPULAR AND SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE, that most of us no longer hesitate before rattling off information that could be detrimental to somebody’s reputation. But the wisdom declared in the Golden Rule continues to be the key to steering clear of scandal: *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

A few years ago I found myself addicted to spreading stories. The sad thing is that I didn’t think I was doing anything wrong, because I was just “retelling” a truth. But as time went on, I found myself spending hours on the phone or the Internet “catching up” on the latest gossip. People would call me whenever they wanted to find out dirt about so-and-so. I think I finally realized what a terrible person I had become when one “friend” called me to find out if what she had heard about somebody else was true. Her opening words to me were “I’m calling you because you know everything and you invent anything you don’t know”. This is a common Spanish saying in Panama. It’s used to refer to people who gossip a lot. As soon as my friend said those words to me, I realized that that was exactly the image I was portraying and I didn’t like it one bit. I quickly informed her that this time I had no information to share, and hung up the phone.

I spent some time analyzing my behavior and asking God to forgive me for using the gift of speech in such an awful way. I made a vow that day: I would never again use the phone and the Internet to spread stories. And so I simply stopped calling people. Sometimes the entire day goes by without my phone ringing. There are days when I check to see if the phone’s still working. But Praise God, I overcame!

Over the years, my reputation has changed. Now I’m no longer known as the church gossip. In fact, people often accuse me of living on another planet because I hardly ever know what’s going on, and I prefer it that way. Whenever I feel tempted to find out some juicy details, or whenever I feel tempted to share somebody’s private story, I remember that old eighties song written by Jon Mohr.

The Rumor Mill:
*The rumor mill, manufacturing lies*
*The rumor mill, where the truth is disguised*
*The rumor mill, where reputations are crushed*
*The rumor mill, and where nothing is hushed*
*If it can be twisted, you can be sure that it will*
*‘Cause there ain’t nothing sacred at the rumor mill*
VANITY AND DECEPTION

THERE ARE MANY SCRIPTURES IN THE BIBLE THAT CONDEMN DECEPTION but the ninth commandment in particular condemns giving false testimony against our neighbors. As the previous commandment protects our neighbor’s possessions, this commandment protects our neighbor’s good name from slander.

Slander is very damaging to reputations as many times a good name can never fully recover. We may fool ourselves into thinking we do pretty well at keeping this commandment as we don’t make a habit of spreading outright lies about someone but consider with me how many times we have revealed the faults of our neighbor to those who had no need to know them? Doing this is only spreading gossip, a form of slander.

Consider with me again how speaking only half-truths is another way we give false testimony against our neighbor. Half-truths are spoken usually in order to make things appear better for us and worse for our neighbor. Not disclosing the whole truth is just another form of deception.

Consider yet again how often we do not speak up for our neighbor. When we keep silent, our unspoken words are usually taken as being in agreement with what has been spoken regardless of what we think. Too often, our fear of what people think of us keeps us from speaking up. We then become party in helping spread the slander by not stopping it.

All these and many other forms of deception stem from vanity, thinking more of our own reputation then our neighbors as John 12:43 says, we love the praise from men more then from God. Very convicting to consider all these things myself.

The more we make a habit of these forms of deception, the more the truth is not in us and we not only deceive others but begin to deceive ourselves. Let us stop deceiving ourselves and others by doing the following:

First, begin to seek the truth of God’s Word as we read and meditate on the Word of God. John 14:6 says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life”, let us believe and live our lives as though it were.

Next, remain devoted to the Word, following the Spirit of truth that guides us. Then we will know the truth and the truth will set us free as it says in John 8:32.

Then, speak not only the truth, but the whole truth, and in love with the right motives after careful consideration because the tongue can speak life or death into our neighbors lives. Remember, we are only as good as our word and we will have to give an account to every careless word we have spoken as it says in Matthew 12:36.

Last but most importantly, pray Psalm 141:3 that God will set a guard over our mouths and keep watch over the door of our lips in order to stay clear from all forms of vanity and deception so we may begin to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Lori
THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR

BECAUSE THIS COMMANDMENT SOUNDS A LITTLE FORMAL, some may think it applies only to being a witness in a court of law. It’s actually much more than that. We shouldn’t lie—not even little false “white lies.” You know the kind—“Honey, does this dress look good on me?” “Yes, you look absolutely beautiful in that one.”

My husband and I have a truly unique relationship in that he doesn’t tell me what I want to hear. He tells me honestly what he thinks is the right thing. Now, although he’d be hard-pressed to admit it, he’s occasionally wrong about what he thinks, but he still is completely honest with me. That’s hard for me to take sometimes. Just the other night, I asked him, “Would you think I was crazy if I told you I wanted to pitch next year for the women’s church softball team?” What I wanted to hear was, “I think that’d be great as long as you practice through the winter—you’d be a great pitcher—I’ll even help you practice.” What I got was not at all what I wanted to hear, but it was exactly what I needed to hear. He said, “What’s your motivation for wanting to pitch?”

When I started trying to put my motivations into words, they didn’t sound like such good motivations. Like, the pitcher is a very important part of the team. She leads the team and can encourage them with her actions. Besides, no one else wants to do it. All too often over the years of us being in church, I’ve often asked my husband if I should fill this need or that need that comes up. Most of the time he’s told me to wait—that the need will be filled or God will move me to be the one to fill it. Most of the time, he tells me “No, you don’t want to do that.” It’s hard for me to listen to him when I want to do work for God. It’s hard for me to sit back and watch others struggle with something I could do easily. The times I have gone ahead and done things that he’s told me not to do though have been some of the biggest struggles I’ve had in my life—both physically and spiritually.

I’ve noticed that telling the truth in the short-term is always the hardest thing to do, but the best thing to do in the long-term. Lies will come back to haunt you and make things more difficult. I’d much rather my husband respond to me with, “That dress looks ok on you, but this one looks a lot better.” Pray about your honesty with others. Don’t set out to be mean (brutally honest) but do tell the truth when you are asked for your opinions.

Lisa
MOM AND DAD SAT ON THE COUCH HOLDING HANDS, something in my 14 years I had never seen them do before. “You must be tired,” my mother said. “Why don’t you go take a nap?”

That statement by my mother would be the only acknowledgement ever made of the previous night when my beloved father had been drunk out of his mind and broke my mother’s leg. I was the one my mother screamed for in the middle of the night that New Year’s Eve. With a heavy weariness I knew in a split second when I heard her voice that it was going to be a long and horrendous night. I was the one who ran downstairs and tried to reason with my father’s booze-soaked demands that my mother get up and crawl to the hospital, who helped her painfully inch her way up the stairs to her bedroom after he finally passed out. It was I, terrified, who was thrown against the wall trying to protect my mother when he staggered upstairs still drunk and once more tried to force her to walk on a leg whose broken bone almost penetrated the skin.

It was a night spent in hell, a night when I saw evil mask a face I dearly loved. When it was finally over and we were back home from the hospital after my mother’s leg had been cast in plaster, and sobriety had returned to my father, I felt betrayed by their camaraderie, by their show of unity holding hands on the couch, betrayed by the lies I was expected to tell. “Oh, the slate foyer was wet and my mother slipped and fell…”

The irony of me writing this is that in doing so I still feel I am betraying my parents. What presses me to continue is the hope that someone else may read this and recognize what has taken me so long to learn – that it’s not only overt lying that spiritually wounds us, but also being forced into complicit silence, and believing we are traitors if we speak the truth. The time has come for me to lay bare some of those secrets, to believe that healing comes when we are allowed to give voice to what is real and true, despite its ugliness. Inside there’s a desire to place some of my life on an altar, to offer up to God the shame and heartache, to pray it may help someone else in some small way.

In his encyclical on Moral Theology, Pope John Paul II said, “Truth carries with it the joy and splendor of spiritual beauty”. I must believe there is beauty in words allowed to break free, in a soul revealing pieces of itself long entombed in lies and secrecy. I must believe that there is beauty in the journey of releasing truth, and that it will let one’s heart cast off and set sail on a course of healing and wholeness. I must believe, because truth buried in the soil of secrets and lies creates such a world of darkness.

Anne Marie
IN THE FIRST STANZA OF THIS SONG, YOU FIND A GIRL WHO IS LYING to the old man she married. In the second stanza she lies to her lover. In the last stanza, she realizes she is just lying to herself. Lying not only causes others to be deceived; it causes us to be deceived as well.

This shouldn’t surprise us. Satan, the father of lies, still believes he is going to win in the end. That’s why he continues to fight. He knows the end, but he deceives himself into believing in an alternate ending. Why? Because the father of lies lives a lie. There is no truth in him, just as there is no falsehood in God.

We all want to think of ourselves as good. Therefore, we must lie to ourselves often to keep up that pretense. We can’t stand to think of ourselves as liars and cheats and adulterers (even if just in our minds). So we lie to ourselves, sometimes completely blocking out the memory of what we have done, because the truth is too painful to handle.

Yet, as the Bible says, your sin shall find you out. The old man knew the girl was lying about going out to cheer up an old friend. However, I can see the girl talking herself into the lie, saying, “I’m the old friend that needs cheering up”, or “My lover is the old friend that needs cheering up”. How easily we can justify taking what isn’t ours or doing things that are wrong.

When the girl tells her lover that one day she will be coming back forever, he knows she’s lying, also. It is funny how lying just takes over. It becomes as easy as breathing, until lying is second nature, and we can’t tell the difference between the truth and our lies. We come to believe those lies ourselves.

As the end of the song draws near, the girl wonders how things ever got so crazy, and how she ended up as she did. I love the line, “Funny how you knew lying didn’t change things—you’re still the same old girl you used to be.” I think we lie because we can’t face ourselves, who we really are at our very worst. We don’t want anyone to see it, especially ourselves.

But that is the person for whom Christ died—that person we are covering up with lies. He loved us while we were yet sinners. He didn’t come for the healthy. He came for the sick. The longer we believe our lies, the longer we will stay away from the only One who can fix us. Wouldn’t it just be better to admit who and what we are, and let Him truly change us from the inside out? God, help us to be honest with You, with others and with ourselves.

Penny
CONFESSIONS OF A LAWBREAKER

She lied about me, Lord.
What did she say?
She questioned my motives . . . my heart.
Were you motives pure?
Yes.
Then why does it matter?
Because she lied about me. And . . . did it publicly for all to see!
How many times have people lied about me publicly?
Yes, Lord. I understand.
But, you’re still hurt. Just as I am hurt when it is done to me.
Yes, Father.
What did she lie about?
She accused me of having an “agenda” and abusing it.
Did you not say the same thing regarding one of my sons recently?
Yes, Lord.
Judge not lest ye be judged.
Yes, Lord.
Have you asked his forgiveness?
No. I didn’t say it to him, Lord. Just myself.
I heard it.
Yes. You always do, don’t you?
Always. You know what to do.
Yes, Father, I know.
Then do what you must.
I will.
And . . . remember.
I will try to remember, Lord, but I need your help.
I will never leave you or forsake you.
Why are you so good to me, Father?
I created you. Remember? You are my daughter.
Yes.
Don’t forget to remember.
I will remember, Father. With your help, I will remember.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Randee
IT’S SO EASY

_Speak the truth to one another… (Zechariah 8:16)_

Little white lies. Stretching the truth. These are so easy to do given any particular situation you find with kids, friends, family or co-workers on a daily basis.

In many women’s circles, whether at church, the neighborhood, the workplace or even your own family, it’s so easy to say that little white lie against someone you do not like at the present moment. I have been on the receiving and giving end of those scenarios, and they are not pretty!

Jesus makes it very clear in Matthew 5:23-24:

_Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the alter and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift at the alter. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift._

If there is ill will between you and another person, you are to do your part to reconcile with him or her. When you are able to do that, the temptation to lie about that person diminishes.

Tips To Tell The truth:

1. If you are at odds with someone, ask for God’s forgiveness and to give you courage to talk to that person, regardless if you are the giver or receiver of the white lie.

2. When you feel like lying to kids or other loved ones, stop and think of what the potential consequences could be by breaking that trust.

3. Ask God for wisdom to understand the motives behind your lying. Oftentimes, with awareness brings change.
YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR

AT FIRST GLANCE, THE NINTH COMMANDMENT CALLS US TO BE TRUTHFUL when speaking of our neighbors; but, it also makes me think about when people appear in a court of law; they are under oath “to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth!” Nothing omitted; nothing added. Just the plain old facts!

But yet, when we take a closer look at this commandment, we see that God is calling us to be truthful at all times.

The Bible states, “It is impossible for God to lie.” (Hebrews 6:18) Therefore, God is our standard for Truth.

Jesus confirms this saying, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” (John 14:6) The Bible also confirms Satan is the “father of lies”. (John 8:44)

This commandment reminds Christians to be very responsible in how we speak to others. “The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequence” (Proverbs 18:21) Matthew 12:37 states, “And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak.” I don’t know about you; but this verse alone makes me want to put a zipper on my mouth.

As believers of Christ, our goal should be to “. . . speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.” (Ephesians 4:15) God wants our entire lives, even our words, to be a reflection of His Truth.

Easy to say . . . but, listen to this. The Bible says, “no one can tame the tongue”. (James 3:8) “Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God.” (James 3:9)

We are all guilty of breaking this commandment. We have all sinned. The book of James makes a powerful statement saying, “Indeed, we all make mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.” (James 3:2)

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” (Acts 3:19 NLT) “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

I am so thankful for the mercy that God has given us through His Son; Jesus brings everlasting life and eternal hope to a sin-filled world. Won’t you believe in him today?

Karla
FALSE WITNESS

Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Exodus 20:16

This command established the ancient Israelites system of justice on a firm foundation. In ancient Israelite law, the judging of a person’s guilt or innocence was based on testimony by faithful witness. A witness is person who gives testimony for or against someone, often in a law-court setting, where there is considerable concern for the truth of the testimony.

“A man, who bears false witness against his neighbor, is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow”. (Proverbs 25:18)

Some of the weapons mentioned have a curved blade and were designed for piercing or cutting the enemy. This tells us the power of a witness in those days or even in today’s court system. A witness can also be a guarantee of the accuracy of a transaction.

God is seen in the Old Testament as a witness to covenants between individuals as well as covenants between himself and the nation of Israel. Witnessing is also used in connection with the message of the Bible and the second coming of Christ. The Spirit of God also bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God. Any intent to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. Whether is a glance by the eye, hand motion, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. Every hint or exaggerated impression such as to mislead the witness is falsehood.

We have all toyed with the truth at some point in our lives. Some of us toy with it to the point where we forget what it signifies. I was vacationing overseas minding my own business when I met up with a young lady whom I knew. She felt compelled to give me an explanation as to why she was overseas as well. When I returned to the States, I ran into her husband at church and he came over to me and explained why his wife had been out of the country. Both stories were so different and it amazed me that this individual felt that she had to fabricate a story to explain her trip. At that moment, I remembered a text from the Bible that said that everything that is in the dark would come to light.

We have to be so careful who we put our confidence in. Most of us do not think of the consequence of lying. Bearing false witness is a blatant lie that could harm an innocent person’s character. The Ninth Commandment prohibited the defaming or slander of a neighbor, friend, close associate, or even a person that lives nearby. Jesus extended the concept of neighbor to include a stranger, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan and hence all mankind. (Luke 10:25-37)

Lying and falsehood is anti-God and if we persist in this habit, we are ripping His image out of our souls.

Dorothy
Thou shalt not covet.
ADMIRATION OR COVETOUSNESS?

ENVY HAS BECOME SO COMMON THAT WE NO LONGER SEE ANYTHING WRONG with it. In fact, we have come to accept it as the “normal” thing that happens between women. And so we bring up our little girls to believe that it’s okay to come home and say “I want a sweater (or CD, or toy, or whatever) just like Jeannie’s”. Truth be told, I personally know a number of mothers who rush out to buy every item or gadget their child desires, just to be able to keep up with the Joneses. We have become so materialistic and greedy, that we run into debt just for the sake of appearances, and we are passing on this irreverent habit to our children.

It’s possible that we don’t covet our neighbor (the people we know), but many times we envy the lives of the Rich and Famous. You might think there’s no harm in that, but there is; it’s still unacceptable behavior because you’re yearning for what’s not rightfully yours.

I know it’s not easy to sit back and watch everybody else accomplishing great things while our lives seem to be stuck in a rut. It’s annoying to have to scrimp and save to get by, when some people seem to have money to throw away. It’s painful to watch your own children walk out wearing shabby clothes when others are able to afford designer brands. But since we tend to move towards the things that primarily consume our thoughts, little good can come from wasting precious time yearning for money, power, recognition, and glamour because we know that they do not bring happiness.

So what’s the solution? How does one go about striving to be more than a mere copy of somebody else? How do you stop becoming frustrated when others are able to achieve what you only dream of? How can you attain satisfaction?

- You put things into the right perspective and you manifest gratefulness to God for what He has done in you and for what He’s yet to do.
- You ask God to put sincerity in your heart so you can walk up to that person and congratulate her for her new acquisition or her latest achievement.
- You find worthwhile, godly people to look up to.
- You learn the difference between covetousness and admiration.
- And as you grow spiritually, follow the advice of Deuteronomy 6:6,7 and teach that difference to your children.

Dinorah
HAVE YOU CLEANED UP YOUR INNER SELF?

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT GETS TO THE HEART OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY and reveals whether we are merely trying to look good outwardly or whether we have truly surrendered our will to the Lord. It deals with our inner most thoughts unseen by man but what God is very concerned with nonetheless because action often follows our thoughts.

Although the first nine commandments speak more about our outward behavior, we must realize they all begin in the mind with our thoughts. Therefore, God felt the need to make it very clear how He forbids against all covetousness toward other people and things in the tenth commandment. As our outward sinful behavior stems from these sinful inner thoughts.

Covetousness damages our walk with the Lord as it prevents us from getting to the heart of true Christianity in our lives where we fully surrender our will to the Lord. It is a form of idolatry because we usually end up spending more time, money and energy on those desires and on our own agenda then we do God and doing His will.

To get to the heart of true Christianity, we must be concerned with cleaning up our inner self first. Our efforts to clean up our outer self and looking good outwardly are all in vain otherwise because we inevitably become what we think.

Therefore, let us be on our guard against any covetous thoughts and realize our lives are not measured by the abundance of our possessions as Luke 12:15 says.

Then, let us also “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” as it says in 2 Corinthians 10:5 to begin the cleaning process of our inner self.

Next, let us always be content with what we have as it says in Hebrews 13:5 and realize our real success and happiness in life is in the state of our mind as we learn to trust and surrender our own will to the Lord.

Last and most importantly, let us be sure meditate on the Word of God in order to transform our minds and have the same Spirit and mind of Christ. Praying all the while that we may live by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of our sinful nature as it says in Galatians 5:16.

Lori
GOD REALLY ENDS WITH A DOOZY HERE. To covet something means to strongly desire something that belongs to someone else. This is a struggle I often see in churches. There was a man who recently passed away. He was a great Christian, always giving what he could and diligently managing God’s blessings. He retired several years ago from a family business he’d grown and worked in for many years. His children were taking it over now and continuing the business. He lived in a huge beautiful house, and I think even had a house at the lake as well. It’s easy for human nature to look at all that he had and desire his wealth, his house, his cars, and his business.

Instead of being happy for him, there were people who looked at what he had and wishing they had the same things. I hope they were able to see past the material things to the great joy he had inside of him - the joy and happiness of Jesus in his heart. Whenever he heard of a need in the church family, he would take care of it. He also organized many charity golf tournaments and was very active in our community.

Instead of looking at what others have that you don’t, look at what God’s blessed you with. I personally, am thankful for my house. I struggle to keep it clean and keeping the clutter picked up. I cannot imagine living in a mansion or bigger house! Be happy for others - sharing in their joy of God’s blessings, but don’t get caught up wishing you had what they have. Take care of what God’s given you and be thankful for your blessings. God will take care of the rest!

Lisa
I do not envy the fields
dressed in their elegant blossoms,
or the sky for its
lacy garments of clouds.

No, I do not covet the
lovely fragrance of the forest pines,
or the dew of diamonds sparkling
on the meadow at dawn.

Thank you, Lord, for the
treasures you give me
to bask in and savor,
the spendor and beauty
I cannot keep for myself.

May I always gaze upon
this lovely world of yours
without envy or greed.
May my heart see purely
like a moon’s soft touch
on snow covered land.

Anne Marie
‘You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.’

**DON’T STOP ‘TIL YOU GET ENOUGH**  
(MICHAEL JACKSON)

YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR’S HOUSE. Have you ever driven through those majestic neighborhoods and wondered “What in the world do they do to be able to afford such huge houses?” My husband and I laugh and tell ourselves that those people are probably in hock up to their eyeballs, and it may be true. However, I wonder if it is because secretly we wish we could afford such extravagance.

You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. I have gained so much weight over the past seven years, it’s not even funny. I tend to feel so horrible about myself that I just have to push myself to even be seen in public. It’s not my husband that is coveting other people’s pretty wives – I’m coveting them because I want to be one of them. In moments of extreme anguish, I’ve thought of stomach stapling and cutting off unnecessary body parts because I covet how other people look. I don’t think God is happy with that type of covetousness either.

You shall not covet their servants. Most people don’t have household staff, but they do have employees. They have a successful business and can do so much because of it. My husband just started working for a small business that we figured must make 4.8 million dollars a year, with most of that profit. I joked with him that he needed to start one of those franchises – but was I really joking?

If we really didn’t stop till we got enough, I don’t think we’d ever stop. I think that’s why we don’t ever stop moving and working and striving. The worst part is, when you are focused on “getting”, you forget all about “giving” and also about “receiving”. As Christians, it is not our job to “get” anything. It is our job to trust in and depend upon God to provide for all of our needs according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19). What people forget is that in the scriptures directly preceding that one, Paul talks about how the people gave generously to him, and that is why God will provide for their needs.

I think covetousness comes from fear – fear of not getting what we want. So what is the cure for covetousness? It is the opposite of fear – faith and faithfulness, trusting and depending upon God, giving as God puts it on our hearts, sowing so He may water and reap a harvest. Then the things we truly need will be added unto us. They may not always be what we want, but He will provide what we need.

*Penny*
I watch her dance, Lord, and I want to be her.  
*She is who I created her to be and you are who I created you to be.*  
But, I’m not good enough.  
*I beg your pardon. Do you think I made a mistake?*  
No. You don’t make mistakes.  
*Really? Do you believe that in your heart?*  
I try to, Lord, but sometimes I feel so worthless.  
*You are worth far more than rubies.*  
Maybe, to you—but not to others. They are always criticizing me.  
*Whose word matters? Their words or mine?*  
Yours. But, I hear their words more often than I hear yours.  
*Why is that? I am available to you at all times.*  
I guess I don’t make the time to listen to you.  
*Not only do I speak to you, I have given you my Word in print. I have something to say about what you’re living.*  
What do you have to say, Lord?  
*Thou shalt not covet.*  
It’s so hard, Lord. She is so talented. She’s a great technician. I’m not. That’s what they say.  
*But, I’ve given you something else.*  
What, Lord? What have you given me?  
*You tell me. Acknowledge the gifts I have given you.*  
Well, I work harder than the others.  
*Yes, but, you’re still comparing. Stop comparing. What else?*  
Passion, Father. You’ve given me passion... and commitment.  
*Ah... very good. Now, let me give you another gift—a prophecy. The day will come when you will rise above the others. But, here is the condition: You will rise above the others when you no longer care if you rise above or not. This is my prophecy.*  
But, how do I get there, Father? How do I get there?  
*Stop coveting. Make the choice. What will you choose?*  
I choose you, Father.  
*Good. When it goes from a choice in your head to a choice in your heart, then you will rise above the others.*  
Thank you, Father. But, I’ll need your help on this. I can’t do it alone.  
*Yes. Without me, you can do nothing but with me you can do all things.*  
I love you, Lord. I love you.  
*I love you, too...more than you know.*  
*Thou shalt not covet.*
AT ANY COST

TO COVET MEANS TO DESIRE SOMETHING WITH EVIL AND/OR SELF-SERVING MOTIVATION. A few years ago, I had a business partnership with a coaching colleague. I didn’t even pray about it before we made the decision, and before I knew it, this colleague’s ‘true colors’ became known.

We came from vastly different career backgrounds, which was one of the reasons we came together. We learned a lot from each other. Ultimately, making money was my colleague’s only goal. She was downsized from a six-figure position and was willing to compromise her integrity and business partnership with me to make money. She and I had very different definitions of partnership. I knew two months into it that the partnership would not last. After one year we parted ways, but still remain cordial to one another.

I walked away from that business deal realizing that I had been seduced by the desire for money. That had never been a motivator in my life until then. I had begun to covet the need to achieve, and equated money with success. The growing uneasy spirit I had in my heart was the Holy Spirit convicting me to return to the heart He gave me: That heart was serving people without the motivation of getting something in return.

Nowadays, my motivation is helping people through the gifts God has given me. Ninety percent of my coaching and speaking business comes from referrals and repeat business. My prayer before every speaking engagement is “Lord, give me your words to impact lives that will point them to you.” I am so grateful that God was able to turn my heart back to a servant’s heart rather than self-serving.

Tips on How Not to Covet:

1. Apply Psalm 139:23:
   
   Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Take time to evaluate what areas of your life you covet more than loving and serving God.

2. Select a Bible study that shows how to build a more intimate relationship with God. Trust Him to meet all your needs. Focus on the eternal rather than the temporal.

Lynn
THOU SHALT NOT COVET

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.
(Exodus 20:17 KJV)

Covet? We sure don’t hear that word anymore. Or do we?

The dictionary defines covet as “to desire wrongfully, or without due regard for the rights of others.” To covet is also described as “to crave something that does not belong to us.” Wow! As the commandment states, this refers to anything that belongs to another!

Does this commandment even apply to our generation? Well, of course it does! Just because we don’t hear the word ‘covet’ anymore, doesn’t mean that the commandment is not in effect. It just means that we think of coveting in different terms. Think of it this way . . . when you long for, or desire something that is owned by someone else; you are coveting.

This could include anything! Not just material things either. Think about these examples.

- His possessions.
- His position at work/church/organization
- Vacations.
- Reputation.
- Status.
- Money.
- Circumstances.

In today’s society, there is an underlying belief that our generation is entitled to their hearts’ desires regardless of whether God approves these desires or not. The focus of this generation is to have the best of everything, in order to keep up with the Jones. People are always competing, always comparing their lives to others.

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. (2 Tim 3:1-4 NLT)

The question remains. Are we going to choose to honor God and believe His Word? Or are we going to sacrifice our relationship with the Father in heaven to fill our own foolish desires? Isn’t it interesting that we are back to commandment one, where we are called to keep God as the 1st priority in our lives?

“Seeking the Kingdom of God above all else, and living righteously, and He will give us everything we need. (Matthew 7:33 NLT)

Choose Jesus today!

Karla
I COVETED AND I TOOK

The Tenth Commandment

Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s house; thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s wife; or his man servant; or his maidservant; or his ox; or his ass; Nor anything that is thy neighbor.
Exodus 20:17. KJV.

Covetousness is an intense desire to possess something (or someone) that belongs to another person. It is not the wanting of something that is wrong, but wanting it at the expense of others or from a motive of jealousy or envy. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteems other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Romans 1:29

The Israelites were warned to abstain from the accursed things in the city of Jericho, lest they will become accursed if they take of those things from the camp. They did not listen, they committed a trespass regarding the accursed and they angered God. Acham saw the beautiful Babylonian garment, the silver and wedges of gold he coveted. Acham’s confession to Joshua was that he saw, he coveted and he took. That is the way that sin often works in our lives. Like For example, Eve she saw the fruit on the forbidden tree, she desired it and she took it and ate it. Even though she was warned not to eat the fruit, she ate it any way.

We have been warned of the consequences of sin, then, why do we still commit them? There are only two ways of doing things, God’s way or our way. Covetousness comes from greed, self-centeredness and a disregard of the law of God with no regard for others. Let's take a look at Judas betrayal of Jesus when he went to the chief priest and asked him, what are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you? He was then given thirty pieces of silver for his betrayal of Jesus. Can you believe that he sold Jesus out for only thirty pieces of pieces of silver? Surely, He was worth more than that. We always want to know what is in it for me. Greed was clearly the motive for Judas’ betrayal.

Satan is another example of covetousness; He desires what God has and will do anything to get it. He said He will ascend into heaven, and will exalt his throne above the stars of God. He will ascend above the heights of the clouds and will be like the Most High. He thinks He can be like God, so he plots and continues plotting until He realizes that God is the one in control of heaven and earth. How many of us desire the things we know that we cannot have?

"Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said; I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Hebrews 13:5.

Doroty
ENVY

A MODERN SYNONYM FOR THE WORD COVET WOULD BE: ENVY. The root of many of our current societal issues is envy. The Encarta Dictionary defines envy as: the resentful or unhappy feeling of wanting somebody else’s success, good fortune, qualities, or possession; to desire something possessed by somebody else. Envy begins with jealousy. Inwardly, we begin to cherish that small desire to have what the other person has. If left unchecked it will transform into an envious spirit. Like an addiction envy can become engrained in our souls and give us no rest. Envy must be constantly fed with things, stuff, and attention. Envy is worst than jealousy; it wants what the other person has so bad that it is willing to destroy it, if necessary.

Our concern with keeping up with the Jones’, our compulsiveness with shopping, our obsession with possessing the latest fad or gadget, marital infidelity - are all rooted in envy. We have been infected with this irrepresible desire to have what others have. Most adulterous spouses will confess that they were unfaithful because they honestly felt that they were missing out on something. It’s unexplainable because most of the time we don’t even need what we want to have. Somehow we feel that if we have them they will bring some type of happiness, power, or comfort to our lives. Yet, time and time again it fails to happen. We go out, we get the stuff or we get involved in illicit relationships we remain unhappy, and we also accrue unnecessary financial, emotional and spiritual debts.

Perhaps our envy would not be so bad if it only affected us. But, our envy also impacts others. An envious spirit leads to self-centeredness, and it can end in self-destruction. An envious spirit constantly makes choices and decisions of personal benefit - often at the expense of others.

Think about it, if there was less envy there would be less crime. People would not be trying to take from others what belongs to them. If there was less envy there would be less grudge. We would all be content with what was ours. If there was less envy there would be less infidelity. Spouses would invest in making their marriages work instead of fantasizing for others. If there was less envy there would be equal distribution of everything. Instead of wanting to always get for ourselves, we would be seeking to always give; and we would be divinely rewarded for our gifts and our acts of faith.

One simple way of eradicating envy out of our lives is to start questioning the reason behind our actions. Do we really need another pair of shoes? Why if the pantry is filled to overflowing we are still shopping for groceries? Can we really not spare $20 for charity? Is he really nicer looking than your spouse? Look into the mirror of your soul today. Is there any envy?

Norka
**Contributors**

*Lori Arriaga*

Lori Arriaga is the wife of Marco and the mother of Selena and Lorenzo whom she home schools. As a homemaker who felt the need to strengthen our homes and families she founded Christian Women’s Resources - a website dedicated to encouraging spiritual growth and giving women hope and encouragement through inspirational articles and quality resources that relate to women in their various roles. As a mom who home schools, her main focus is on her Heritage Builders department. Her main website can be found at www.ChristianWomensResources.com and her CWR Reviews and More blog can be found at Christian-Womens-Resources.blogspot.com

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*Lisa Boyd*

After arguing with God for several years, Lisa finally gave in and started writing. She is a child of God who hates titles and all the preconceptions that come with those titles; a stay-at-home mom who takes her only daughter to public school; the tuneless wife of a man who sings boldly for God; a tech geek who has been accused of having an affair with her laptop; a home executive who doesn’t have a cooking or decorating bone in her body. Her hospitality includes a big “hey ya’ll” at the door, lots of hugs, and a cold can of Coke. Most days you can find her in old softball tshirts, hair scrunchies and no makeup.

Longing to live in the mountains with some horses, she lives in the middle of North Carolina with her husband, daughter and two dogs. Future plans (God-willing) include writing articles, devotions and maybe a few books. One day she may even take her charming Southern drawl on the road.

She blogs about a variety of things from a Christian perspective at simply His (simplyhis.org) and writes devotionals at Potty Prayers (pottyprayers.com).

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*Anne Marie Goodrich*

Anne Marie Goodrich, founder of GoodrichDesign.net, designed the “Mirror, Mirror…On the Wall” book cover as well as being one of our contributing writers. Anne has also been a contributing writer for several book series including Chocolate for Women, God Allows U-Turns and the Chicken Soup for the Soul anthologies.

With her partner, author Jim Palmer, Anne is co-creator of www.turnloveinsideout.com, an initiative to help others recognize the immense love God has for them, and to turn that love “inside out” into the world. She has learned much about God’s love at Threads Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Additionally, Anne is the mother of four, including her son-in-law. She currently makes her home with her teenage son and one ill-mannered and haughty feline named Mrs. Jinx.
**Penny Haynes**

Penny Haynes is an Audio/Video Internet Marketer, specializing in Podcasting. Part of her credentials stem from working as a director, editor and producer for a Christian television show for two years. Other skills were learned while writing, singing and recording Christian music, and serving as Praise & Worship Leader at her church. Now, her business pursuits combine her audio/video background with database and web programming, allowing her to develop audio/video software. Her main websites are http://www.1stPodcastPublishing.com, www.OnlineCommunityMagazines.com, and www.PennyHaynes.com.

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**Randee Krumwiede**

Randee Krumwiede is a Christian life coach and founder of the Pink Collar Club: A Christian Lifestyle Community For Women. She is the author of *The Path To Purpose*, the signature Christian life coaching program of the Pink Collar Club, and *The Coach Approach to the Women of the Bible*. Randee is a member of Patchwork Creative Arts Ministry in Raymore, Missouri where she serves God and others. She is the wife of Will and the mother of Tristan, Olivia, and Joseph.

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**Lynn Jarrett**

M.A., LCPC, is a Coach, Speaker and Bestselling Author

After life detours, career transitions, and finally understanding what true life/work balance is, Lynn’s own growing pains have provided insight and motivation for people to transform into the passionate, purposeful lives they were designed to live.

Lynn has 20 years of ministry and corporate leadership experience along with providing her expertise in the areas of counseling, coaching, and life balance. Lynn has helped thousands of people from all walks of life understand their personal and professional “passion busters” and how to set up a strategic life plan that gets results. (Often times in the ways you least expect it!)

Lynn has been married (to the same man) for 17 years, and is a mostly terrific mother to her three daughters. Besides her husband being the definite minority in the sorority, Lynn protects and treasures her personal life with great fervor and passion, like the way she approaches everything in life.

Lynn’s personal website, www.lynnjarrett.com provides free, popular resources like teleseminars, e-courses and weekly items. You can also learn how her different areas of professional speaking and coaching are available for you to enhance your personal, professional, and spiritual life!
Karla Meachem

Karla Meachem is a Christian woman who has a passion for Christ. Karla is a firm believer in keeping God first; as she knows the empowerment that is available to everyone through Christ. Karla recently started EmpoweringChristianWomen.com to inspire, encourage and empower women to remain Christ-centered in their daily walk with God.

She is also a rep for two direct sales companies; please visit ChristianToysForGirlsAndBoys.com for Biblical toys for your children and www.digitalmomteam.com/karla for all or your e-book needs. She lives in Stockholm, Saskatchewan with her husband Allan and their two children – Kiara and Austin.

Doroty Palmer

Doroty Palmer is a passionate woman of God on a mission to testify in favor of God’s goodness and His mercies to all who are searching for hope and willing to hear of the faithfulness and truth of His promises. She is the founder of Share My Wisdom and lectures on topics including Stepping Out In Faith, Being Whole In Your Singleness, Life Is In The Power of the Tongue and more. Doroty is the co-founder of the National Association of Black Telecommunications Professionals and the founder and past president of Granville T. Woods Association. She currently serves as a counselor for 4 Real Women International and on the Executive Board of the Pink Collar Club. She is the Women’s Ministry Director for Corona SDA church and a board member. She is also the producer of her own talk show, Where Are We Going? Doroty is the mother of 3 grown daughters and resides in New York.
**Norka Blackman-Richards**

Panamanian-born Norka Blackman-Richards is the president and founder of 4 Real Women International, Inc. a non-profit international grassroots networking organization that ministers to women. Through this organization women around the world are empowered to seek and develop their highest potentials.

A sought-after empowerment speaker, she has reached thousands of women in the United States, Costa Rica, Bermuda and Panama with the universal message: *you have been given divine authority to re-define yourself.*

The daughter of Adventist missionary parents Norka did her elementary and high school education under the Latin American, British, Dutch and Caribbean educational systems. Besides equipping her with the ability to communicate in four languages, this unique experience shaped her with a great appreciation and high sensitivity to diversity of cultures, languages, and people.

Norka currently lectures for the City University of New York at Queens College teaching writing instruction. She resides in Queens, New York with her husband, Pastor Warner Richards.

You may visit all three of Norka's sites at [www.4realwomen.com](http://www.4realwomen.com), [www.4realwomeninternational.org](http://www.4realwomeninternational.org) and [www.paramujeresreales.com](http://www.paramujeresreales.com)

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**Dinorah Blackman Williams**

Dinorah Blackman Williams lives in the beautiful country of Panama with her husband and daughter, Imani. In 2003 they founded International Christian Academy, which has now become a prominent bilingual elementary school. A few years later they established Centro Técnico de Estudios Superiores, a junior college offering associate degrees in many different fields. In order to offer scholarships to underprivileged children who desire to obtain a Christian education, they also created The Imani Foundation.

Originally a Chemistry teacher, Dinorah has a passion for words and currently teaches Creative Writing at the prestigious Oxford International School. She has written and published over thirty devotionals and articles, and three books.

Once a week Dinorah hosts a radio program called “Place of Praise” that has ministered to hundreds of Christian men and women for almost eight years.

[http://www.icapanama.com](http://www.icapanama.com)
[http://www.lulu.com/blackman](http://www.lulu.com/blackman)
The Pink Collar Club is a Christian Lifestyle Community For Women.

**Our Vision**

To grow the Pink Collar Club into an international network of 1 million members and 1 million ministries.

**Our Mission**

To engage each member of the Pink Collar Club in discovering and implementing God’s unique purpose for her life and His Kingdom.

**Our Promise**

Committed to building the kingdom of God, 10% of all dollars earned go to various ministries and missionaries worldwide.

**Our Philosophy**

To fully live within this biblical paradigm:
- Faith First
- Family Second
- Community Third
- Career Fourth

**Our Model**

To become women of virtue as described in Proverbs 31.

**Our 7 Core Values**
- Truth
- Character
- Perseverance
- Industry
- Maturity
- Courage
- Charity

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OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Bible

The sole basis of our belief is the Bible, composed of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament. We believe that Scripture in its entirety originated with God, and that it was given through the instrumentality of chosen men. It is the revelation of God to man, and the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct. (II Timothy 3: 15-17; I Thessalonians 2:13; II Peter 1:21)

God

The one true God has revealed himself as the eternally self-existent “I AM” the Creator of heaven and earth and the Redeemer of mankind. In the beginning, God created out of nothing the world and all the things therein, thus manifesting the glory of His power, wisdom and goodness. By His sovereign power, He continues to sustain His creation. By His providence, He is operating throughout history to fulfill His redemptive purposes. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10; Matthew 28:19)

Salvation of Man

The central purpose of God’s revelation in Scripture is to call all people into fellowship with Himself. Originally created to have fellowship with God, man rebelled against God, choosing to go his independent way, and was thus alienated from God and suffered the corruption of his sinful nature, rendering him unable to please God. Man’s only hope of redemption is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

A) Conditions of Salvation

Salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, being justified by grace through faith, man becomes an heir of God according to the hope of eternal life. (Luke 24:47; John 3:3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11; Titus 3: 5-7)

B) The Evidence of Salvation

The inward evidence of salvation is the direct witness of the Spirit (Romans 8:16). The outward evidence to all men is a life of righteousness (Ephesians 4:24; Titus 2:12)

Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. (John 1: 1-3) The Scriptures declare:

His virgin birth (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:31, 35)
His sinless life (Hebrews 7:26; I Peter 2:22)
His miracles (Acts 2:22; 10:38)
His substitutionary work on the cross (I Corinthians 15:3; II Corinthians 5:21)
His bodily resurrection from the dead (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:39; I Corinthians 15:4)
His exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 1:9, 11; Acts 2:33; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:3)

The Holy Spirit

The essential accompaniment of a genuine saving relationship with Jesus Christ is a life of holiness and obedience, attained by believers as they submit to the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead. He was sent into the world by the Father and the Son to apply to mankind the saving work of Jesus Christ. He enlightens the minds of sinners and awakens in them recognition of their need of a Savior. At the point of salvation, He indwells every believer to become the source of
assurance, strength and wisdom. The Holy Spirit guides believers in understanding and applying the Scripture. He uniquely equips believers with spiritual gifts that enhance the church and leads believers toward unity. His power and control are appropriated by faith, making it possible for the believer to lead a life of Christ-like character and to bear fruit to the glory of the Father. (I Corinthians 12; I Corinthians 13; Galatians 5: 22-23)

Human Destiny

Death seals the eternal destiny of each person. For all mankind, there will be a resurrection of the body into the spiritual world, and judgment that will determine the fate of each individual. Unbelievers will be separated from God into condemnation. God’s judgment will reveal His justice in consigning them to perpetuate in eternal retribution their own rejection of God. Believers will be received into eternal communion with God and will be rewarded for works done in this life. (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:11-15)

The Church

The result of union with Christ is that all believers become members of His body, the church. There is one true church universal, comprised of all those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Scripture commands believers to gather together to devote themselves to worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, observance of baptism and communion, fellowship, service to the body through the development and use of talents and gifts, and outreach to the world. (Ephesians 1:22-23; Hebrews 12:23)

Faith and Practice

Scripture is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. The Pink Collar Club recognizes that it cannot bind the conscience of individual members in areas where Scripture is silent. Rather, each believer is to be led in those areas by the Lord, to whom she alone is ultimately responsible. We believe the Statement of Faith to be an accurate summary of what Scripture teaches. All members shall refrain from advocating doctrines that are not included in the Statement of Faith in such a way as to cause dissension.

“In essentials . . . unity. In non-essentials . . . liberty.”
Dear Lord,
I recognize that I have not lived my life for you. I have been living for myself and that is wrong. Please forgive me. I need you in my life. I want to live for you. Thank you for sending your one and only Son to die on the cross for me. I long to receive the forgiveness you have made freely available to me through this sacrifice. Come into my life now, Lord. Take up residence in my heart and be my Lord and my Savior. From this day forward, I will no longer be controlled by sin or the desire to please myself. But I will follow you all the days of my life. These days are in your hands. In the name of Jesus,
Amen

Did You Just Say This Prayer?
You have just made the most important decision of your life. Please contact Randee@PinkCollarClub.org so that we may cover you in prayer.

For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)