

And God spoke all these words:

<sup>2</sup>“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. <sup>3</sup>“You shall have no other gods before me. <sup>4</sup>“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. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup>“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. <sup>8</sup>“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup>“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. <sup>13</sup>“You shall not murder. <sup>14</sup>“You shall not commit adultery. <sup>15</sup>“You shall not steal. <sup>16</sup>“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. <sup>17</sup>“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

## 1

If anyone were to ask Suzanne if she was a Christian, she would say yes without hesitation. If anyone were to ask who or what was most important in her life God would top her list for sure. But it really isn’t true. How could it be? Bible reading was never part of her daily routine and weekly Sunday worship became a thing of the past several years ago when she had become passionate about losing some weight and getting into shape. In addition to her weekday workouts, she began running and her running partner liked to train on Sunday mornings. And that pretty much did it. So Suzanne has spent the last several years caring for her body but neglecting her soul. Maybe it was exercise that took God’s place, but the argument could be made that Suzanne had become her own god. After all, it was all about what she wanted for herself now. The very first commandment, **You shall have no other gods** which she had first learned as a child, she was now shattering on a regular basis.

Our Savior’s response to one of Satan’s temptations shows Jesus keeping this first commandment: **The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’ (Matthew 4:8-10).**” Jesus would not let power or things in this world or Satan himself unseat his heavenly Father as his highest priority. When we let our precious time, people, things or activities become more important to us than God, we break God’s very first commandment. But our Lord never did. Jesus was perfect in our place and he traded his perfection for our sins against the very first law of God.

## 2

*“Seriously, you’re working for that company now?! Oh my God!”* That particular phrase peppers Mark’s everyday speech. *“Oh my God!”* It surprises his church friends that he uses God’s name in such a careless and senseless way. They cringe when they hear it

because they know full well God's second commandment: **You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.** They know that Mark's thoughtlessness and disrespecting of God's name is a sin against God, but they feel too uncomfortable to say anything. That makes them guilty also. They aren't standing up for God's name or reputation. God isn't pleased with them or Mark.

How different it was in Jesus' life. Luke's gospel tells us one of the ways that Jesus used God's name properly. It tells us that **Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:16).** Calling on our heavenly Father in prayer is a proper use of God's name. **One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name (Luke 11:1-2).**" Not only did Jesus not misuse God's name, he used it properly and led others to do the same. Jesus was perfect in our place and he traded his perfection for our sins against the second commandment of God.

### 3

*"You don't need to go to church to be a Christian."* How often had Sara heard that from her sister lately? Heather grew up in the same house, went to the same church, and attended the same Christian school. But she's in college now and has been sold on the idea that *"organized religion"* is bad and that you can be a Christian all on your own. Sara is sure that can't be right. God even says as one of his commandments **Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.** She knows that the pastor is right: if a person stays away from God's Word, their faith will eventually die.

**Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom (Luke 4:15-16).** That's what Luke writes. It's interesting, isn't it, that going to church was the most normal, natural thing for Jesus to do. According to his human nature, he needed and wanted to hear the Scriptures. It's interesting that Jesus—the very Son of God—needed that time with God, his Word, and God's people. But people today, including us sometimes, think they don't need to grow and even feel that weekly worship is unimportant. Jesus was perfect in our place and he traded his perfection for our sins against the God's third commandment.

### 4

Alison really didn't care what her parents said. What did they even remember about being 14 years old? She would tell them what they wanted to hear. *"Yes, mom, we were all wearing seat belts."* *"Dad, I know better than to be serious about a boy at this age."* *"You know I wouldn't even want to try smoking or drinking alcohol—even if my friends were doing it."* Yup, she knew what would make her mom and dad happy and keep them off her back. But she did pretty much what she wanted when they weren't around: inappropriate texting with her boyfriend on her cell phone, visiting websites that she knew were off limits, she even tried a cigarette one night at the park because her friends were teasing her. For some reason, Alison never drew the connection that her rebelling against her parents was also rebelling against her Savior's words:

**“Honor your father and your mother.”** Nor did she ever consider that so many older people who break this commandment by disrespecting the authority of the government or leaders in the church began on the same path she was now walking down.

When Jesus' was twelve, his parents told him it was time to go home from the temple and we hear this about him: **Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them (Luke 2:51)**. Scripture also tells how Jesus—even as he hung on the cross—showed love for and provided for his mother, entrusting her to John's care. Scripture also tells us of Jesus' respectful obedience to the government's authority—even the ruling bodies that put him to death. Jesus was perfect in our place and he traded his perfection for our sins against the fourth commandment of God.

## 5

It's always like walking on eggshells around Devin. Some days at church he's just fine. At other times, he looks like he's out for blood. And no one who was there will ever forget the congregation meeting when he totally blew a gasket. The people had never seen someone with such hatred for the pastor. Linda couldn't stand him because of the anger and hatred he showed at times. Sadly, she was not aware that she was harboring hatred in her own heart toward Devin. Linda knew the commandment **“You shall not murder”** and she would never ever think about killing someone, but she failed to recognize her own sin against it, forgetting the words of 1 John, **Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him (1 John 3:15)** .

Jesus taught his disciples, saying **Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you (Luke 6:27-28)**. And you know well his prayer from the cross, **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34)**.” What we cannot do, Jesus did perfectly right up to the very end of his life. He felt and expressed and showed perfect love for others. Not only did he never harm another person, there was no hatred toward others in him at all. Jesus was perfect in our place and he traded his perfection for our sins against God's fifth commandment.

## 6

Though she's constantly told by her friends that everybody is doing it, sex isn't part of Melissa's college experience, at least not yet. But if Carlos wanted to, she probably would. She's had a crush on him since last summer. Melissa thought that maybe she should talk to her mom since her mom told her about some of those kinds of mistakes she made at that age and how those mistakes were, in part, responsible for the affair she had a few years back that caused her and dad to split. She knows that God says **“You shall not commit adultery.”** She knows that in the Bible it says **Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral (Hebrews 13:4)**, but everything about sex just seems so confusing and there's so much pressure.

As Jesus taught the crowds on a mountainside one day he said **“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28).”** We all ought to be condemned before God whether we have committed sexual sins or just thought about them. And to think that Jesus was never tempted sexually the way we are would be a mistake. We’re told that in Jesus **We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin (Hebrews 4:15).** Jesus was perfect in our place and he traded his perfection for our sins against the sixth commandment of God.

## 7

*“It’s not really stealing.”* At least that’s what Steven told himself. That was his reasoning when it came to illegally downloading music for his iPod®. That was his reasoning when he photocopied a ton of sheet music from the church’s stash so that he wouldn’t have to buy it. That was his reasoning as he wasted probably an hour or more of his company’s time each day as he read his favorite blogs and perused *ESPN.com*. *“It’s not really stealing.”* That’s what he said, but when he really stopped to consider any of these things, he had trouble reconciling them with God’s clear command: **“You shall not steal.”** The thing is, he really didn’t want to stop.

When it came to earthly possessions, Jesus was an interesting case. We hear that several women who followed him supported him from their wealth (Luke 8:1-3). He himself said that while birds and animals had their nests and holes, he didn’t even have a place to call home (Matthew 8:20). He had very little, but never do we hear that Jesus cheated or stole from others. Whether we take things that are not ours or cheat our employers or employees and, in effect, steal from them, we have the assurance that Jesus never did anything of the sort. Jesus was perfect in our place and he traded his perfection for our sins against God’s seventh commandment.

## 8

She totally ruined Janine’s reputation around church. She didn’t really mean to; she was just doing what she always did. Others called it gossip; Monica preferred to call it *“sharing information.”* It didn’t really matter if the information she shared about other people was nice, whether it needed to be said, or even if it was true. She just liked talking about other people. Her friends in the congregation knew that about her, and they rightly considered Monica’s gossip a sin against God’s command to **“not give false testimony against your neighbor.** On the other hand, they were usually willing to listen and not call her on it either.

Just before our Savior went to his death, his friend Mary anointed him with some extremely expensive perfume. While others denigrated her for doing so, it was Jesus who would not do so, but instead defended her. **Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. I tell you the truth,**

wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her (Matthew 26:10-13).” We are often very critical of others and more than willing to tell our friends about the evils or misfortunes of others—or listen to reputation-damaging gossip. Our Lord never spoke of others in that way. Jesus was perfect in our place and he traded his perfection for our sins against the eighth commandment of God.

## 9 & 10

*“Man, Justin has it all.”* Erik said to himself on more than one occasion. *“He’s got a solid job, a gorgeous wife and he’s always driving the greatest cars. Everyone likes him too. Man, if only I had a better job—like Justin’s cushy job—then we could have all the nice things Justin and Maria have. And Maria—Maria is amazing! Why can’t Liz be more like her? If I was married to Maria, life would be so much better too.”* **“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”** Erik had heard those last two commandments plenty of times, but since he’d started obsessing over his friend’s life, he had become increasingly dissatisfied with the blessings God had given to him.

Jesus had Paul write this in his letter to Timothy: **But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. (1 Timothy 6:6-8).** We often lose sight of what our true needs are and become more concerned with what we don’t have than with the blessings we enjoy. While our Savior lived on this earth, he didn’t wish for more. He totally trusted that his Father would care for his every need in the very best way. Jesus was perfect in our place and he traded his perfection for our sins against God’s ninth and tenth commandments.

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WHAT ARE WE TO DO WHEN FACED WITH GOD’S LAW? We’ve considered the sins of others, but it’s caused us to see our own sins. As we have viewed God’s Law, his Ten Commandments, we must admit that we have broken them over and over. When faced with God’s law, we must repent of our sins and trust that Jesus kept every part of God’s law perfectly for us. We trust that Jesus’ sacrifice paid for our sins because the Bible promises us that **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).**

Since that is true, you and I now look at God’s Law in a whole new way. God’s law no longer condemns us. So with the threat of punishment from God removed by Jesus, we are now happy to see these commands as a guide for living the way that pleases God. By living this law of God, we show our love and thanks to him. And today Jesus’ life has given us a pattern to follow.

We pray that the Holy Spirit causes such deep appreciation in our hearts for the forgiveness we have in Jesus’ perfect keeping of God’s law for us that it is our joy to live according to his Word all the days of our life, until the day comes that we struggle with sin no more and enjoy the blessings of heaven with our Savior. May God in his grace grant it to us. Amen.