

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

“In the Face of the Lord”

John 8:2-11

- 2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.
- 3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group
- 4 and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.
- 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"
- 6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger.
- 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."
- 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.
- 9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.
- 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"
- 11 "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." NIV

What was Jesus writing on the ground? We cannot be certain, for the Scripture does not say directly. But the Law does have a process that deals with the accusation of adultery. It is found in Numbers chapter 5.

Num 5:12-30

- 12 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'If a man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him
- 13 by sleeping with another man, and this is hidden from her husband and her impurity is undetected (since there is no witness against her and she has not been caught in the act),
- 14 and if feelings of jealousy come over her husband and he suspects his wife and she is impure--or if he is jealous and suspects her even though she is not impure--
- 15 then he is to take his wife to the priest. He must also take an offering of a tenth of an ephah of barley flour on her behalf. He must not pour oil on it or put incense on it, because it is a grain offering for jealousy, a reminder offering to draw attention to guilt.
- 16 "The priest shall bring her and have her stand before the LORD.
- 17 Then he shall take some holy water in a clay jar and put some dust from the tabernacle floor into the water.
- 18 After the priest has had the woman stand before the LORD, he shall loosen her hair and place in her hands the reminder offering, the grain offering for jealousy, while he himself holds the bitter water that brings a curse.
- 19 Then the priest shall put the woman under oath and say to her, "If no other man has slept with you and you have not gone astray and become impure while married to your husband, may this bitter water that brings a curse not harm you.
- 20 But if you have gone astray while married to your husband and you have defiled yourself by sleeping with a man other than your husband"--

- 21 here the priest is to put the woman under this curse of the oath--"may the LORD cause your people to curse and denounce you when he causes your thigh to waste away and your abdomen to swell.
- 22 May this water that brings a curse enter your body so that your abdomen swells and your thigh wastes away." "Then the woman is to say, "Amen. So be it."
- 23 "The priest is to write these curses on a scroll and then wash them off into the bitter water.
- 24 He shall have the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and this water will enter her and cause bitter suffering.
- 25 The priest is to take from her hands the grain offering for jealousy, wave it before the LORD and bring it to the altar.
- 26 The priest is then to take a handful of the grain offering as a memorial offering and burn it on the altar; after that, he is to have the woman drink the water.
- 27 If she has defiled herself and been unfaithful to her husband, then when she is made to drink the water that brings a curse, it will go into her and cause bitter suffering; her abdomen will swell and her thigh waste away, and she will become accursed among her people.
- 28 If, however, the woman has not defiled herself and is free from impurity, she will be cleared of guilt and will be able to have children.
- 29 "This, then, is the law of jealousy when a woman goes astray and defiles herself while married to her husband,
- 30 or when feelings of jealousy come over a man because he suspects his wife. The priest is to have her stand before the LORD and is to apply this entire law to her. NIV

Jealousy is a powerful emotion. If it manifests itself as envy of what others have, it is destructive. When it acts as a guarding emotion, zealous to retain devotion to one's self (as in a marriage) or to God (and God to His own holiness), it is good. The covenant given on Mount Horeb was considered by the Jews to be a ketubbah, a marriage covenant.

Jer 31:32

It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. NIV

Jer 3:1-5

- 1 "If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled? But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers-- would you now return to me?" declares the LORD.
- 2 "Look up to the barren heights and see. Is there any place where you have not been ravished? By the roadside you sat waiting for lovers, sat like a nomad in the desert. You have defiled the land with your prostitution and wickedness.
- 3 Therefore the showers have been withheld, and no spring rains have fallen. Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute; you refuse to blush with shame.
- 4 Have you not just called to me: 'My Father, my friend from my youth,
- 5 will you always be angry? Will your wrath continue forever?' This is how you talk, but you do all the evil you can." NIV

The people of Judah in Jeremiah's time were calling on God as their friend. But they were not behaving as intimates in the relationship. Their mouth declared one thing while their hearts and actions declared another.

Deut 5:2-7

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

3 It was not with our fathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today.

4 The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain.

5 (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

6 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

7 "You shall have no other gods before me. NIV

*"You shall have no other gods **before** me." This is the first commandment.*

Deut 6:12-19

12 be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

13 Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.

14 Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you;

15 for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.

16 Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah.

17 Be sure to keep the commands of the LORD your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you.

18 Do what is right and good in the LORD's sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers,

19 thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the LORD said. NIV

The commandment to have no other gods before Him rests on the words of the One who brought His people out of Egypt, out of slavery. "I am the One who set you free," the Lord says, "you owe your allegiance to no other."

Rom 6:20-23

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. KJV

Rom 8:9-13

9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

- 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
- 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.
- 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors -- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.
- 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. NKJV

We were in slavery before Christ came into our hearts. Since God has brought us out of the slavery of sin (Egypt), we have an obligation to walk after the Spirit, for we have been espoused to One Husband.

2 Cor 11:1-3

- 1 I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that.
- 2 I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.
- 3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. NIV

As God is jealous over His people, so His shepherds are jealous over the flock for their pure devotion to the Lord. Eve was deceived into a breach of covenant by the serpent's cunning. Adam knew no such deception. He willingly broke the covenant.

Hos 5:15-6:7

- 15 Then I will go back to my place until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me."
- 1 "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.
- 2 After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.
- 3 Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."
- 4 "What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears.
- 5 Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth; my judgments flashed like lightning upon you.
- 6 For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.
- 7 Like Adam, they have broken the covenant- they were unfaithful to me there. NIV

Adam stands accused of having broken the covenant, of being unfaithful to God. The commandment to have no other gods before Him rests on the strength of relationship and debt. Deuteronomy tells us that this covenant was made "face to face" with the people of Israel. The word used for "face" in the Hebrew is the same word translated "before." We are to have no other gods in the face of God. This gives us the barometer of our devotion. Whatever obscures the face of God for us is an idol competing for His devotion.

In human terms, what is the most intimate “face to face” relationship? Marriage!

Song 5:16

His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. NIV

A marriage without friendship is a poor marriage indeed. Our spouses are to be our best friends, intimately aware of our hearts. The Lord is to be our ultimate friend, He whom we seek in all of life’s joys and sorrows.

Ex 33:11a

The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. NIV

This is the standard of our adherence to the first commandment: are we in friendship with God? This friendship with God is a matter and testimony of faith.

James 2:23

And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. NIV

How is this friendship to be approached? We must approach it as Abraham and Moses did, in faith face to face with our Lord.

*The Hebrew word translated “face” in Exodus 33:11 is **paniym**. It is used over 2,000 times in the Old Testament. It can mean before and behind, in front of, or in the presence of. But it also means the face and the presence of a person. It is the word used to describe the presence of God. To have no other gods before Him is to have our face in His face with no obstruction. We will not live in the fullness of life unless this is the case.*

Ps 16:11

You will show me the path of life; In Your **presence** is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. NKJV

Ex 35:13

the table with its poles and all its articles and the bread of the **Presence**; NIV

Isa 63:7-9

7 I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us-- yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

8 He said, "Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me"; and so he became their Savior.

9 In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his **presence** saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. NIV

In the presence of the Lord is fullness of joy. The angel of His presence, who was God Himself, was with Israel in their wilderness wanderings. The bread laid in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple was called the shewbread, the bread of His presence. It represented the tribes of Israel and it was placed in the face of the Lord (on the table in the holy place). Thus it was the bread of the face, the bread in the face of God.

Ex 20:1-3

1 And God spoke all these words:

2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

3 "You shall have no other gods **before** me. NIV

Something marvelous happens when God's face shines: light breaks forth and with it, light.

Gen 1:2

The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the **face** of the waters. NKJV

2 Cor 3:15-18

15 Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.

16 But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. NIV

1 Cor 13:12

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. NIV

To see God face to face is our hope. As Job said:

Job 19:26-27 NIV

26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;

27 I myself will see him with my own eyes-I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

We gain this "face time" with the Lord in this life when we worship Him.

Ps 24:3-6 NIV

3 Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?

4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.

5 He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior.

6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob. Selah

2 Chron 7:14

if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. NIV

Ps 27:8 My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek. NIV

Ps 105:4 Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. NIV

God desires us to seek His face. This is why He says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." He doesn't want any idols obstructing His view of His children and their devotion to Him. Because of His desire for intimate fellowship with us, He is jealous over us.

1 Cor 10:21-22

21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? NIV

He is the strong man. If we arouse His jealousy, surely He will deal with us as with a wayward wife. As with the water of cursing (Num. 5 and the incident at Marrah), unfaithfulness brings a curse. His desire is not for us to be cursed. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength! That is His desire. Anything shy of that is idolatry.

In our devotion to God, we are saddled with a battle.

Gal 5:17-18

17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. NIV

Even as the desires of the flesh lust against the desires of the Spirit, the desires of the Spirit lust against the flesh. Thus, both are thwarted in their efforts. The good news is in verse 18. If we follow after the things the Spirit lusts after, the desires of the flesh are mortified and we are no longer under the law.

James 4:1-5

1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? NIV

One could seemingly be obedient to the letter of the law; never proclaiming any god greater than Jehovah, never worshipping an idol, being very devout in devotions. But the call to Zion is a higher call. Zion's measure of our devotion to God is based on friendship. If we have made peace with the world, we are at enmity with God. We cannot serve them both.

Matt 6:24-33

- 24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.
- 25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?
- 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?
- 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?
- 28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.
- 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.
- 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?
- 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'
- 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.
- 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. NIV

The devotion that the Lord demands is singular. No person, place, or thing can be loved more than Him.

Luke 14:26-35

- 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-yes, even his own life-he cannot be my disciple.
- 27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.
- 28 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?
- 29 For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him,
- 30 saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'
- 31 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?
- 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.
- 33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.
- 34 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?
- 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." NIV

If we don't count the cost of discipleship, we may sue for terms of peace with the enemy long before he even attacks us! We need to know the price and the payoff.

Heb 12:2-3

2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. NIV

Would Jesus have stood the cross if He didn't know what His payment was buying? Even so, we should know that following Him will cost all of our devotions and our very lives. But the payoff is life lived eternally with Him.

Jer 3:12-14

12 Go, proclaim this message toward the north: "Return, faithless Israel,' declares the LORD, 'I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful,' declares the LORD, 'I will not be angry forever.

13 Only acknowledge your guilt-- you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me,'" declares the LORD.

14 "Return, faithless people," declares the LORD, "for I am your husband. I will choose you-- one from a town and two from a clan--and bring you to Zion. NIV

Hos 2:14-16, 19-20, 23

14 "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her.

15 There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt.

16 "In that day," declares the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.'

19 I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.

20 I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.

23 I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'" NIV

John 15:13-15

13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. NIV

Matt 11:19

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." ' But wisdom is proved right by her actions.' NIV

1 Cor 16:22 If anyone does not love the Lord-a curse be on him. Come, O Lord! NIV

1 Cor 16:22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. KJV

How is this relationship cultivated?

Rom 5:5

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. NIV

God has poured into our hearts His own love. When we confessed Jesus as Lord, He removed the idol of self from our hearts.

Eph 2:1-5

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,
2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.
3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.
4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,
5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-it is by grace you have been saved. NIV

Rom 8:14-15

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." NKJV

By His Spirit, we cry out to Him. As we obey the Spirit's desire to be in the presence of God, all other competing loyalties shall fall away. We will then have no other gods in His face; for in the light of His presence, no idols may stand. Let us seek His face in faith that He might say of us, "You are my friends." Amen!