

## TEN COMMANDMENTS

**Psalm 19 (responsive)**  
**Exodus 20:1-20**

**Faith Community**  
**October 2, 2005**

### Introduction

Commandments aren't "in" these days. Our time doesn't like rules; we don't like being told what to do. Our era is based more on "I did it my way." You can almost hear someone saying, "You know, commandments don't really work for me."

Remember the film, "Dead Poets Society?" It was a great film and it received lots of awards. Robin Williams plays a student who goes against the way his school is teaching to form a separate society of people who think for themselves. The theme of the movie is, "Don't tell me what to think, I'll decide for myself. I'll see if it fits my life." That film is symbolic of our times. Something is true if it works for me; it's not true if it doesn't. Although what's not true for me, it may be true for you. We judge truth by our own lives, even though each of us only has very limited experience, in a very limited environment.

### I

You can't steer a boat without a rudder. Without a solid guide in place, the boat will be tossed all over. The worse the storm, the farther the boat will be thrown. Even in calm times it will drift off course without our knowing it.

We sometimes go fishing in Lake Erie. To catch walleye you drift without an anchor so that your lure moves. We've often been amazed, even on a calm day, when after a half hour we have drifted a huge distance.

These are rudderless times. Many people are drifting. We face a crisis of what is right and wrong. People fall into problems with alcohol, drugs, sex, but also meaninglessness, living for self, living for right now.

Actually, it seems that people are either drifting with no rudder or their rudder is locked in place. For many the rudder is so inflexible that they go around in a circle – a large circle granted, but still they go in the same pattern because the rudder is immovable.

### II

The Bible offers us the Ten Commandments. They are given as God's rule for us. They result in better living for us, because God wants us to have a more abundant life. Remember Jesus' words, "I have come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly."

These commandments are the rudder for Jews and Christians. They aren't God's suggestions or God's guidelines; they are commandments. This is how we are to live. We live in God's house, and these are the house rules.

### III

The amazing thing is that there are only ten of them. Have you ever thought about that? If I were in charge of commandments, there would be 6,853 to cover all the bases, every situation, don't leave any ambiguity. There would be huge volumes of laws, something like the Criminal Statutes of the U. S. Government. You'd need a library to house them all.

Even if you look at the laws for a city, there are volumes of laws. Lawyers write them to cover every detail, every loophole, and every situation. That's the human way...spell it all out.

And, of course, it wasn't too long after they received the Ten Commandments that religious leaders began to spell out each of the Ten Commandments. The Old Testament book of Deuteronomy means literally "the second law." They took those Ten Commandments and spelled them out in hundreds of little laws for every occasion. For example, one of the second laws tells you how far you can walk on the Sabbath before it is working, and therefore breaking the commandment.

On the other hand, God's commandments are so basic – don't steal, don't kill, don't commit adultery, only have one God, don't worship idols...

### IV

As you know, the Ten Commandments have been in the news a lot lately. People have wanted to post them in courtrooms, classrooms, and city parks. This went on for so long in the courts that it went clear to the Supreme Court, and their ruling didn't seem to help very much.

Controversy swirls about the Ten Commandments – almost everybody wants them – and almost nobody knows what they are. Stop people on the street and ask them to name the Ten Commandments and they'll be lucky if they get half of them.

I'd like to see Jay Leno do one of his "Jaywalking" segments about the Ten Commandments. I don't know maybe he already has.

"Do you support posting the Ten Commandments in schools? "

"Yes."

"What are they? Name the Ten Commandments."

"Uh, don't steal, don't kill, don't mess around...how many is that?"

"Three. Only seven to go."

"Umm... is there something about same sex marriage?"

"No."

"Oh, wait, I know. Don't lie!"

"It's don't give false testimony, but close enough."

"How many more do I need?"

"Six."

Everybody believes in them, but almost no one knows what they are.

## **Conclusion**

When God gave us the basic rules to live by, God only gave us ten. In the years since then we've piled on rules, regulations, and expectations. This included everything from not dancing to not playing cards to not drinking wine (even though, of course, Jesus did).

When Jesus came to us, he didn't hand out a rulebook of hundreds of regulations; instead, he asked, "What's in your heart?"

Jesus taught us it's not just about how we appear on the outside. Jesus asks us about our intentions. Do we give to a cause because we really need a tax deduction, or because we care about the people in need?

Jesus asked questions that are beyond law enforcement. They are the questions only you and I can answer. We can only answer them by being honest with ourselves and with God.

Amen