

FOCUS ON FAITH

TEN COMMANDMENTS

I probably should have written this piece a couple of weeks ago at the beginning of September when we started our new "Prayer for the Week" series on the theme of The Ten Commandments.

Most of us know something of the Laws Moses brought down from Mount Sinai whilst the Israelites were wandering aimlessly around the wilderness en route from their escape from captivity in Egypt to The Promised Land. God wanted to impress on these people that His standards were completely different to theirs and decided to spell out to them in detail how He expected them to live.

The Ten Commandments are all about relationship and respect – to God and with each other. Although Jesus summed them up in two pithy statements – ***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind"*** and ***"Love each other as you love yourself"*** – my guess is that most of us (including me) probably couldn't recite all ten – well at least not in order.

"So why?" and *"So what?"* might be your response.

It's true that whilst the UK legal system was originally based on Biblical principles, and in essence those referred to in The Ten Commandments, it could be argued that we don't really take much notice of them nowadays – that's why I've asked various Church Leaders to compose prayers around them. And for a few moments I'd like us to have a quick look at these ancient but still relevant instructions in the light of our culture and language. So forgive me if the way I've described them below isn't exactly as they're written in the Bible – you'll find the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 – but my hope is that it will stimulate our thoughts.

In an age of political correctness and tolerance for other people's views we seem not to care that God is offended

Our relationship with God. In the first four Commandments we see that God seeks true devotion not the left-overs of our lives when we've done everything else. He isn't interested in half-hearted commitment, sharing second place with our ambitions, hopes and dreams. Of course He wants us to enjoy this life – the prophet

Jeremiah says that God has plans for us, to give us a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29: 11) – but we need to honour and respect Him above all else.

That means using His name appropriately as well. How many times in the last week have you heard God's name or Jesus' name used as a swear word? Or how about the shortest verse in the Bible, ***"Jesus wept"***

used in an inappropriate context? I can't think of a single time I've heard the name of another faith's leader used as an obscenity yet in an age of political correctness and tolerance for other people's views we seem not to care that God is offended in this way.

And it also means giving our time to God. Sundays have become just like every other day of the week for most of us.

I'm not advocating we should sit at home and be miserable but I do believe we have lost something special in taking a break from our normal routines and giving ourselves an opportunity to refresh ourselves spiritually as well as physically.

Our relationship with each other. Just take a look at the last six Commandments and reflect on them in the context of what is happening in our nation. We have lost much in terms of respect for others.

- Parents are often ignored and many have gone absent without leave as far as taking their responsibilities towards their children is concerned.
- We are the abortion capital of Europe disregarding the sanctity of life.
- Divorce and extra-marital affairs have far reaching consequences for families and communities.
- Crime is rampant and many City Centres have become *"no-go"* areas because of violence and robberies are on the increase.
- We are often cynical about what others, especially political leaders, say because we've been misled and lied to so often.
- Advertisements promoting the latest *"must have"* consumables play on our desire to have more than our neighbours and kid us into believing we are more successful than they are.

I hope you don't feel I'm being judgemental but God specifically warns us in the Ten Commandments about these areas.

So over the next few weeks as the various Prayers for the Week are published, take some time and reflect on the implications in your life of the Ten Commandments.

If you'd like to find out more about the real, radical Christian faith, log on to www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk which has details of local Christian Churches and contact details.



Stephen G. Derges
Elder & Worship
Pastor,
Bridgnorth Baptist
Church