

# Consecrating

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Exodus, chapters 19, verse 3 through 7, and chapter 20, verses 1 through 17. Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob, and what you are to tell the people of Israel.

You yourselves have seen what I did in Egypt, and how I carried you on Engel's wings and brought you to myself. Now, if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.

Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites. So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak.

And chapter 20, And God spoke all these words, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters below.

[ 1 : 1 8 ] You shall not bow down to them or worship them. 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 male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

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.

Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land of the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

[ 2 : 5 4 ] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thanks, Jan. So I think that it's important to point out that this is the first time that the Israelites actually hear from God.

Before that, they just hear that Moses is telling them that God is speaking to him. But this is the first time that God says to them, I am your God.

So I want to invite you, and you have a little job to do today. So some of you might have little pieces of paper in your bulletins like this.

If you don't, just take a scrap piece of paper, and I want you to write down the three things that matter the most to you. Don't think too long. Just put the top three things, one being the most important.

Nobody's going to look at these. Nobody's going to collect them. They're simply for you. So I'm going to ask you, with those things, how many of you listed number one as God?

[ 4 : 06 ] Okay, there are a couple. So there's a book called The Ten Commandments from the Backside, and the author suggests that when we make our list of things that matters the most, that we should designate number one as God.

And we'll talk about whether or not that God is with a capital G in our lives. So doing a Google search, there's a lot of commandments that apply to everything from dueling to etiquette to getting dressed.

So when looking up the definition of commandment, it says it's a divine rule, especially one of the Ten Commandments, or a rule to be observed as strictly as one of the Ten Commandments.

So in our series that God makes a way out of no way, we can learn, as Steve told us on Father's Day, that God made with us a covenant.

He has a list that if we follow it, we can follow any situation that we come across. Our first four commandments show how to love God the way he wants to be loved.

[ 5 : 13 ] And the last six tell us how to love our neighbors. And I know as a child in Sunday school, we learned the Ten Commandments. We had to memorize each one.

I still remember my Sunday school teacher, Mrs. Standard, when I was little, asking us to stand up each week and recite what they were. How many of you did that?

How many of you could tell me what the Ten Commandments were if you had not heard them? I asked them last night what one of them was, and there was silence.

I said, I'm guessing you didn't have to do that. We were taught as children that it's a list of instructions from God. But it always came across as don't do this, don't do this, don't do that.

But the Ten Commandments were a gift from God to the people. He wanted them to start a new kind of society. And it was to help them draw closer to God in their daily lives.

[ 6 : 16 ] So let's take a look today about what we learned in Sunday school from a more adult point of view. And see how it can help us in our daily walking with God.

So when we start the Ten Commandments, we start with God. How we interact with God and how we picture him determines what we think about ourselves and what we think about other people.

The first commandment is a big one. Thou shall have no other gods before me. Ann Robertson, an author, wrote, This one tops the list because it's like the top button on your shirt.

If you don't get this one right, nothing else is going to line up. The Ten Commandments aren't meant to steal our happiness. Their guidelines are meant to help us live healthy and happy lives in a relationship with God and with each other.

God called those Israelites into an exclusive relationship with him. When the Israelites were in Egypt, they worshipped so many gods, just like the Egyptians did.

[ 7 : 25 ] And during much of the history, we find that they were tempted into worshipping other gods. Their worship of false gods would only bring them pain and heartache.

And sometimes I think, what does this commandment have to do with us today? We're not tempted to worship ancient Egyptian gods. At least I'm not. I don't know about you.

But it doesn't mean that we don't have false gods that tempt us. Because anything can become a god. It might be social media or relationships or success or popularity or travels.

God said, no other gods. And that's his condition. That we have to give up our belief in everything else and let it rest in God.

Letting God be God. There has to be no holdouts, no doubts, no hidden plans. Simply let God be God. The key to the first commandment was told to us by Jesus when he was asked which was the most important.

[ 8 : 33 ] He didn't list any one of those commandments. Instead, he said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

When we love God with all that's in us, we leave no room for any false gods. The second commandment, You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in the heavens above or the earth below or the waters beneath the earth, prohibits us from two things.

The worshiping of images or idols of false gods. And it prohibits us from making or in worshiping idols intended to represent God. In the past, idols, those gods you could see were made out of things like wood or stone.

They were placed in temples or palaces and people would go and pray and they would make offerings. While they were journeying through the desert, the Israelites struggled with not being able to see a God, not having that representation in front of them.

And they frequently wandered across the path and strayed away from God and went towards an image of something they created to represent God, to remember the golden calf.

[ 9 : 55 ] The problem with any idol or image of God we have is that God can't be comprehended. We limit God in our understanding because there's more to God that can ever be pictured.

So what does this have to do with us? I think maybe all of us are capable of breaking that second commandment because any material object can become an idol.

We can make idols of our churches. It can be an organ or a steeple or a flag or an altar or a favorite hymn or a way of doing things.

It's been said, and they tell this to new pastors, that these idols are the things that pastors don't know or worship until they try to move worship in another direction, which leads to weeping and gnashing of teeth.

These everyday gods that we create don't allow our God to live and move. They keep Jesus sealed in that tomb of, this is the way we've always done it before.

[ 11 : 02 ] And those are my hated words. Other people may make idols of the pastor or the music director or the Bible, and they worship the Bible more than they worship God.

We have to be careful that things, even good things like missions and music and social justice, all the things that we might do for God, we have to be careful that they don't take that place for God in our lives.

God is bigger than anything we can ever imagine. And as I'm saying this, the VeggieTales song is running through my head. And we can't allow our image of God, the power of the Holy Spirit to be contained.

We have to allow it to move freely in our hearts and in our minds. This brings us to our third commandment. Thou shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.

Many years ago, I had my identity stolen, and that person opened credit cards, tried to get people I knew to send money, and caused a whole lot of chaos. Just like the anger I felt when I found out, I imagine that God is angry when people are taking advantage of others, using his name.

[ 12 : 20 ] You shall not take the name of your Lord in vain. When we don't take God's name seriously, or we use it as if it wasn't something of significance, it causes harm.

In Jesus' time, words were powerful, and names were chosen for very specific reasons. In the Bible, we hear stories of people's names being changed when significant events take place in their lives, when Abraham's name, Abram's name was changed to Abraham.

So there's several ways that we might break this commandment. The one we most often think about is profanity. The word profanity comes from the Latin pro, which means outside, and phantom, which means temple.

It literally means taking something holy from inside the temple and throwing it outside. In other words, it's defiling something that's holy. To profane God's name is to use it without reverence, to use it casually as if it didn't matter.

Ann Robertson tells about a colleague of hers who moved to a new church, and he was a clergy, and when he and his young son were with a group of some of the members of the congregation, his son said, Jesus, it's hot.

[ 13 : 41 ] The pastor was embarrassed that his son said that, and he quickly spoke up and said, his mother taught him that. Ann says, God's name isn't to be thrown around lightly or used simply for our own gain or advantage.

But that's one of the smaller concerns related to this commandment. The real damage comes from not using God's name inappropriately in our speech, but by taking God's name as our own and acting in ways opposed to God's love.

As people of God, we represent God in the world by our words and our actions, but we can distort God when we live in ways that damage his name. I think about those priests who abuse children or preachers who promise to bless anyone or heal them that send them a monetary donation.

But it also can mean average people like us who simply don't practice what they say they believe. Whether taking God's name too lightly, using it in profane ways, misrepresenting God by the way we speak and act, or failing to keep our word and honor our commitments we made in God's name.

We're all still guilty at some point of breaking this commandment, and when we do that, we show a lack of reverence toward God. And we're demonstrating to the people around us that we're not taking God or God's name seriously enough.

[ 15 : 13 ] How many of you remember when businesses were closed on Sundays? When I was really little, we would come home from church and not do a whole lot, but play around. I remember stories my grandmother would tell of coming home from church in Georgia, staying in their Sunday best, and reading or playing quietly, and they could never, ever get dirty.

Having the whole family together for a big dinner around Big Mama's table. Sunday was the Sabbath, a day of rest. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

We've become so overscheduled that we become burned out. There seems to be so much to do and so little time to do it that we even fill Sundays with work.

We're overscheduling ourselves, and I'm just as guilty. But God didn't mean for us to live this way. God gave us a day to rest each week to slow down and to find peace within ourselves.

The fourth commandment tells us that we're to rest on the Sabbath because God rested on the seventh day. But we have a hard time taking that day for rest.

[ 16 : 27 ] We feel indispensable. The universe survived God taking a day of rest, but we feel like we can't do it, that everything will fall apart if we do.

Because of this tendency to overwork, to overcommit, to overschedule, people feel emotionally, spiritually, and physically exhausted.

In a recent Gallup poll, two-thirds of people felt burned out some of the time, and another one-fourth felt burned out very often or always. Author Brene Brown says, and here's a quote I once heard from a priest, if you don't want to burn out, stop living like you're on fire.

Burnout can have serious consequences on our physical and mental health, on our relationships, our job performance, and our spiritual lives. God recognized that need for us to rest, renew, and have recreation.

And so God provided the Sabbath for us. The fourth commandment has two requirements. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

[ 17 : 44 ] We know that God didn't need to rest. God chose to rest. God established a rhythm between work and rest and modeled it for us to follow.

But how do we keep the Sabbath holy? Holy in Hebrew means something set apart for God. Set apart the Sabbath as holy means treating it as a day that's given to God.

God has claimed one day out of seven. We need to give him that one day. It used to be that people would attend church every Sunday unless they were sick.

But now we find our churches in competition with travel and work and sports. We have taken a day that's meant to be holy and we've made it ordinary.

And it's not that those things aren't important because I have teenagers and I know that they are. But there needs to be a day for you to set aside to renew yourself.

[ 18 : 49 ] A day where you're not working, where you're resting. So how can we restore that holiness of Sabbath? Think about the joy of worship, connecting with each other and having church events, seeing people and sharing God's love.

Going to church on the Sabbath isn't the goal. God is the goal. So whether you take Sunday as your Sabbath or you find another day, God is your goal.

Every person wants peace and love, the answers to their questions, and to be let into heaven. When a church gives these, its doors overflow.

Adam Hamilton suggests that we make a list of four things that renew us or bring us joy that we have not done for a while or we haven't done much lately. So next Sunday, I invite you to do those after church.

And I want to hear what you've done on your Sabbath. Remember the rhythm of work and rest that God modeled for us. Remember that the Sabbath is meant to be a day of rest, of joy, and renewal.

[ 20 : 03 ] Remember that worship can be fun. And it's a time of celebration, of thanking God. That church can and should be the most pleasurable and restorative experience that you have during the week.

But remember, most importantly, the words of Jesus. The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath. I've been very lucky to grow up knowing most of my grandparents and all of my great-grandmothers.

It's been these people, along with my adopted grandparents, who formed me into the woman I am today. These people need to be treated with colossal respect and honor.

Honor your father and mother. When you lose an elder, you lose a part of yourself. You lose a connection to history, to stories, to culture, traditions.

Our elders are like libraries. Losing one is like a library that burns down. And you can't replace that. There was a study done comparing the way that Native Americans view elders and the way that we view our elders in American culture.

[ 21 : 21 ] In our society that puts so much focus on production, we often see them as incapable of working and therefore useless. Americans tend to put our elders away in nursing homes or other facilities and view them as not worth our time.

The Native Americans place great value in their elders, and we need to also. We need to treat them with respect and pay attention to them when they speak. They're held in high regard in the Native American tradition for their wisdom.

They teach the younger generations about the tribe's culture and history and traditional ways of life. Those elders are consulted by the tribal leaders before decisions are made.

And they hold positions in ceremonies and healing practices. And when one of those elders spoke, you listened. It didn't matter if that person was part of your family, you listened.

Clearly, we could learn a lot from how to observe the fifth commandment from the Native Americans. It seems like such an easy thing when you first read it.

[ 22 : 37 ] Honor your father and mother. Six words. But it can be so complicated. And I think what makes it difficult is when we hear honor your father and mother, we misinterpret this commandment as a command to children to obey their parents.

Honor doesn't mean obey. The Hebrew word for honor means heavy or weighty. It has to do with duty, respect, care, thoughtfulness, all sorts of human values directed to one's elders.

I was reading, and the best scholars of today tell us that this commandment was primarily intended to make sure that people took care of their elderly.

So think about the ways that we can help our older adults, not only in our old church, but our community and large. Our neighbors, people living in senior housing, they need our time they need someone to talk to who will really listen to them.

They need our touch, a hand to hold. They need our friendship. They need to feel valued, respected, worthy, and honored.

[ 23 : 52 ] So honor your father and your mother. Respect your elders. It's one of the foundations of a healthy society, and without it, we're missing out on some of the greatest, greatest gifts of life.

Life's a gift. It's a blessing and something we work hard to prolong and to preserve. Our entire medical profession is here in order to extend our life.

We have potions and concoctions and serums. I went in Eva's bedroom yesterday, and her table was full of things to stop her from looking like she was getting older.

We're made in the image of God, and yet it could be taken from us in so many ways. And I'm talking about the sixth commandment. You shall not murder or you shall not kill.

Either way you translate it, the commandment's about taking the life of one human by another. It's the most basic ethical requirement throughout our history, and you would think that we've learned to listen to it.

[ 24 : 56 ] But we haven't. The last century has been perhaps the deadliest of all of human history. Over 100 million people have been killed in combat, plus millions killed in genocides, countless victims of murders and mass shootings.

We see a perfect example in John chapter 8 when a group of Jewish leaders bring forth a woman to Jesus who's been caught in the act of adultery.

The law clearly stated that hers was a capital offense, and it was to be punished by stoning her to death. Those leaders were looking to catch Jesus and to saying something that contradicted the law so that they could arrest the woman that was almost of no concern to them.

They wanted to know Jesus' response. And what does Jesus say? Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone, and those leaders drop their stones to the ground.

The truth is that we've all sinned. We all fall short. Justice is threatened when we decide that the sins of others are so much worse than our own. You shall not murder.

[ 26 : 10 ] You shall not kill. What a complex commandment to obey. All life is sacred, and we have to treat it that way.

But how do we do that in the complicated, violent world in which we live? We pray. We pray to God to teach us to love, to love our enemies, to love and not seek vengeance, to forgive, to love and see the face of God in every person, because only love can overcome the evil, and the taking of a life is surely a form of evil, because all life is sacred.

the seventh commandment is you shall not commit adultery, and that's pretty straightforward. But we can look at this beyond just an intimate relationship and expand it into being faithful in all of our commitments that we commit to do.

To keep our promises and say what we're going to do and then follow through with it. It's not just about betraying someone. It's about seeing the best in them and helping to bring that out.

Thou shall not steal. We break the eighth commandment in so many ways. While most of us aren't going to end up in jail, we all have a little guilt to bear. What about the saying, finders keepers, losers weepers?

[ 27 : 39 ] If you follow that rule, it means it's okay to keep something that isn't yours. And keeping what you find is really stealing, whether it's a \$20 bill on the sidewalk or a wallet or too much money in the envelope from the bank where you've just cashed a check.

What about when you eat out and get your check and find that the waiter forgot to charge you for an entree or a drink? Do we say something or do we just count it as our good fortune?

How many of us borrow something and forget to return it? Or being late for a meeting or an appointment? After all, that is stealing someone's time.

The list goes on and on and on. Stealing someone's dignity, their sense of self. Stealing's a big deal.

After all, it is one of God's top ten. And one of the reasons that it's such a big deal is that when someone steals, we all pay for it. But there's the personal price that we pay for stealing.

[ 28 : 44 ] We pay with a piece of our character, a piece of our soul that can never be replaced. We also give up some measure of our self-respect. And most of us won't get caught, so no one will never know.

But we will know. And we'll think less of ourselves. We pay a price because it changes our relationship with God. So when we break a commandment, when we sin, we put up a wall between ourselves and God that's not so easily repaired.

It means that we have to admit our guilt to God, ask for forgiveness, and commit ourselves to not doing that again. And in his mercy, God will grant us grace and forgiveness.

And Jesus will forgive you each and every time. Thou shall not bear false witness. I want you all to imagine for a moment that you've been arrested for a crime that you didn't commit.

The police came to your door, put you in handcuffs, and took you to the police station. You were fingerprinted and your picture was taken and you were locked in a tiny little cell. You were then given a lawyer who was so busy with his caseload that he didn't have time to talk to you.

[ 29 : 58 ] You know that you're innocent, but everyone thinks that you're guilty. This happened to Daryl Burton on June 28, 1984, when he was arrested for murder.

Eyewitnesses to the crime said the killer was short about 5'6", which isn't short on me, and a light-skinned black man. Daryl is 5'10 and dark-skinned.

There was no motive, no weapon, no fingerprints, no DNA, no confession, and no evidence of any kind except for two false witnesses who agreed to testify against Daryl in exchange for having serious criminal charges against them dropped.

When it came to the trial and an actual eyewitness to the crime attended, she realized that they had the wrong man and she told the police. But because Daryl's lawyer had not interviewed her in preparation for the trial, she was not permitted to testify.

Daryl was found guilty of murder and was sentenced to 50 years plus 25 years to be served consecutively. It would be 75 years until he could be considered for parole.

[ 31 : 08 ] It took 24 years, but Daryl was finally exonerated on August 29, 2008. It's estimated that somewhere between 1% and 4% of those people currently in our prisons are falsely accused and wrongly convicted.

It means that we have between 23,000 and 92,000 innocent people who are behind bars for crimes they did not commit based on false testimony.

It's clear that bearing false witness can have devastating results and it can be a matter of life and death. We live in a time when it's increasingly difficult to tell what's true.

rather than digging in to understand another person's views, we find it easier to maybe misrepresent them. One reason that this kind of thing can take place so easily is because of social media.

It's so easy for false information to be spread. In the 2016 presidential election season, the Pew Center reported that 23% of Americans either knowingly or unknowingly shared a made-up news story on social media.

[ 32 : 26 ] It means that one out of four of us were posting stories that were not true, that we didn't take time to verify that they were factual before we shared them with other people.

That's breaking the ninth commandment. Another area where we're guilty is bearing false witness is rumors and gossip. Churches are not immune to this and gossip is often shared as a prayer concern.

Sharing that information can help us feel empowered often because it makes us feel morally superior. In the process, we bring harm to people and damage their reputations.

And it's not just women. In one episode of the Andy Griffith Show, Andy and Barney are teasing Aunt Bea and some of her friends about being gossips. So the women plot to show the men that they are just as involved in gossiping as the women.

A stranger comes to town who's a shoe salesman, but the women start a rumor that he's a talent agent looking for new performers. So pretty soon the men are all lined up outside his door at the hotel with their children or other relatives wanting to audition for him.

[ 33 : 39 ] That salesman ends up selling more shoes than he's ever sold before, and the women got the last laugh on the men. But gossip can have devastating effects and those who listen to it are just as guilty.

So while we may get a temporary thrill from being in the know, it's breaking the ninth commandment to participate in gossip by listening. Let's stop and think for a moment about the fact that we follow a man who was arrested and put to death for a crime he did not commit based on the testimony of false witnesses.

Jesus was brought before the Jewish council who were hoping to find false witnesses willing to testify against Jesus. Matthew 26 reads, the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so they could put him to death.

They didn't find anything they could use from the many false witnesses who were willing to come forward, but finally they found two who said, this man said, I can destroy God's temple and rebuild it in three days.

And we know Jesus really did say that, but they misrepresented what he meant by it. And the council and the two witnesses they needed in order to satisfy the legal requirement to condemn Jesus to death.

[ 35 : 01 ] And that's exactly what they did. And Jesus was executed for a crime he did not commit based on false testimony. Breaking the ninth commandment can have deadly consequences.

I'm going to tell you the rest of the story of Daryl Burton. While Daryl was still in prison, he promised God that if God got him out of prison, he would serve God for the rest of his life.

And he found it within himself to forgive all of those who are responsible for him being there. And when Daryl got out of prison, he attended seminary. And when he graduated, he was hired as a member of the staff of the Church of the Resurrection.

He is helping to lead one of the largest United Methodist churches in the United States. It's amazing how God made a way for him. Our last commandment is thou shall not covet.

Covet is wanting something that we don't have, especially if it belongs to someone else. If you think about it, the first incident of coveting took place with Adam and Eve and their desire for the forbidden fruit.

[ 36 : 14 ] God had given them every other tree to eat from except for the tree of not what's knowledge of good and evil. But there's something about being told that we cannot have something that makes us want it even more.

Adam and Eve were told they couldn't have that fruit and all of a sudden that's all that they wanted. And the serpent pushed them along by helping them to rationalize their decision to take the fruit by coveting them and telling them it was their right and what they should have.

And they took the fruit and ate it. coveting what others has is so much a part of our nature that it can be seen even in children.

A teacher in Great Britain did an experiment and he gave each of 10 children a different classroom toy. And then he left them alone for 15 minutes and he observed them from a hidden location.

Within 60 seconds, two of the children were pulling at others' toys while a third child greedily collected all of the toys that those two had laid aside.

[ 37 : 22 ] At the end of a quarter of an hour, three children were in possession of two toys each, three had none, two had different toys from the ones that they had begun, and two were huddled in quarters, clutching the toys they'd be given and wearily eyeing those other children.

On the surface, it may seem like coveting is all about wanting more stuff, having more possessions. But the thing is, some people never get enough stuff.

We acquire more and more and more until our homes can't hold it all and we have to rent storage units, which is one of the biggest businesses lately.

Covetedness is not cured by getting. It virtually nothing to do with what we have or what we need. It's a state of mind and as long as our hearts are covetous, we will want what the other person has no matter how much we have or how little she has.

So we need to give thanks for what we have. We need to practice generosity. When we're giving to others, it doesn't allow us to focus on what we want for ourselves.

[ 38 : 37 ] We can focus on the needs of others instead of our own wants and desires. We can practice love. Love for God and love for each other.

It's impossible to love our neighbor and also crave what's theirs and want to take it from them. You feel better about God because you're seeing more of God's goodness.

You see God's blessings more clearly. You see what we have instead of what you don't. And it leads to a spirit of contentment. The richest persons are not those who have the most but the most who are happiest with what they have.

So it's through these covenants, these ten commandments from God that we can find direction how God is making a way for us even when one doesn't seem possible.

So we just have a couple of announcements really quick. Everything's in your bulletin but we want to make sure that if you have a graduate that graduated from high school, college, technical school that you get those to Adrian by Monday so that we can recognize them.

[ 39 : 47 ] And then the church retreats. So Linda and I invite you to come join us in September the first and second first through the third at Camp Asbury.

So if you're interested in doing that please register for the church retreat. And finally if you did not get the clipboard please make sure that you sign up either to donate something or to help with VBS.

Those are in the back of the church. We need a lot of people to make this happen and to carry the word of God to the children in our community. So may the promises of the Lord and the nearness of God's spirit draw you all closer to Christ.

Go with the blessings of God today and carry his work out into the world. Amen.