

FINDING YOUR

MAXIMUM HAPPINESS



A STUDY OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

WILBUR GLENN WILLIAMS



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FOREWORD



Every once in a while, God sends a person across your path whose presence is so profound that they become beacons on the horizon of a lifetime—pointing you to what is most true, most noble, most worthy of emulation.

Dr. Wilbur Williams has not only been that kind of person in my life. He, and his incomparable wife, Ardelia, have been that kind of influence for countless numbers of students, colleagues, and friends through their long and storied career at IWU (Indiana Wesleyan University).

When I consider the title of this book, *Finding Your Maximum Happiness*, I have to smile picturing Dr. Williams expounding these truths to the rapt attention of students and colleagues.

Memory snapshots include Wilbur and Ardelia worshiping with their daughters, Ranada, Lasana, and Malana; Wilbur passionately speaking in faculty meetings, classrooms, and chapel services; Wilbur striding through campus earnestly talking with students and offering a bright smile or greeting to every person they encountered.

Wilbur stated in the conclusion, "The thesis of this book has been simply that God gave the Ten Commandments to keep us from injuring ourselves, and sometimes others, not only spiritually but physically, emotionally, and psychologically. He wanted us to have a well-rounded wholeness, a maximum happiness in the future, and not do anything in word or deed that would jeopardize or restrict the fullest expression of our personal fulfilment in life, now or in the future."

I agree with his thesis. And, while I cherish the book for the truths it contains, it is the man who seeks to share those truths who has had the most lasting influence on my life.

Dr. Williams knew I wanted to go with him on one of his legendary study trips to the Holy Land. Partly though his personal generosity, he arranged for me to accompany him and to complete a three-credit course on the history of the Holy Land. Frankly, I've forgotten the coursework. I've never forgotten the experience.

I'd had the Bible read to me, and had read it for myself, since childhood. For the first time, the reality of the Bible came alive for me as I listened to Wilbur tell those stories standing in the places where they happened. It wasn't the frisson of the geographical place that so moved me. It was the obvious love that Wilbur exuded for the Scriptures, and most importantly, for the Lord whose magnificent story is told in the Scriptures. This experience changed my life.

While reading the following pages, those who know Wilbur Williams well and those who are just meeting him—assimilate the

wisdom, convictions, and love of a man who has dedicated his life to helping those around him, "... have a well-rounded wholeness, a maximum happiness"

Enjoy.

—Dr. David Wright, presidentIndiana Wesleyan University

INTRODUCTION



FINDING YOUR MAXIMUM HAPPINESS

Maximum happiness! That's the subject of this study. How does one get it? After one gets it, how is it kept? If one had it and lost it, how is it regained? These are questions we will try to answer.

Basically, everyone wants happiness out of life. God wants everyone to be happy. Then why are so many lacking in this area? One might expect poor people—who have little of this world's goods—not to have it, yet many of them do. One might expect people who have everything money can buy to possess happiness, but many of them don't.

Shouldn't those who are beautifully formed and physically attractive have it? If people are adequately talented, especially with ability in sports, and can command millions of dollars in contracts, and have countless accolades heaped upon them, shouldn't they be happy? We all know of people in these categories

who are most unhappy. What is the recipe for happiness? What is the main ingredient?

One of the biggest causes for a deficit in this area for many people is that they seek happiness for its own sake. It cannot be found that way. Happiness cannot be an end or a goal. It is not a destination.

Happiness Depends on Relationship

To study how God planned for us to obtain happiness, let us first ask, on what does true happiness depend? It is not built on popularity, status, geography, or money. In brief, maximum happiness depends most heavily on one thing: relationship. It is a by-product of that and that alone. In the focus of this book, it is a law-guided relationship based on a covenant made with God, first and foremost. There is a sense in which we never "find" happiness by seeking it. But by seeking God, happiness finds us.

The seventeenth-century French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal once noted, "Happiness is neither within us only or without us; it is the union of ourselves with God."

This "union of ourselves with God" depends on our constantly accepting His truth as presented in His Word and continually exercising the wisdom of that truth in our lives. If this is not done, life will deteriorate and decline, and happiness will become ever more elusive.

The best condensation of God's truth, His recipe for happiness, is found in the Ten Commandments. But let's first look at why everyone needs such a small list of "dos and don'ts."

The Fall and Its Results

By simply observing society—whether by reading literature, newspapers, magazines, and social media, watching television and streaming services, or just listening to the radio—it is not difficult to see that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). It is as equally discernible that everyone has sinned because everyone was born with a sinful heart. Everyone was born with a sinful heart because the parents of the human family sinned in the garden of Eden.

There are, of course, numerous individuals who affirm that the stories of Genesis, including the fall, are pure myth. They will admit that at the heart of this "tale" there may be a core of truth from which it has been woven. They think the "garden of Eden" story is simply the end result of people trying to understand and explain the dilemma of life in which they have found themselves.

To hold such a view is to have no answer, then, for no person born has ever had to be trained how to be bad. Since creation, no mother has ever had to say to her little boy, "Kick your sister! Pull her hair! Get mad and sass me!" Nor has a father counseled his daughter, "Stick your tongue out at your brother! Spit on him! Have a temper tantrum! You're too angelic!"

These actions are so often automatic, and children instead have to be trained how to be good. Bad actions just come naturally. Since the heart is evil, it will ultimately boil over, spill out, and stain anyone nearby. This is why it becomes so necessary for parents to set limits (or give laws) early, so as to direct children toward a disciplined life.

The Way It All Began

Though there are those who think some elements of the Genesis account of the fall are too bizarre, Genesis does explain what happened. If we concentrate less on the details and more on the substance of the elements, the picture becomes significantly clearer and loses some of its strange elements.

First, let us consider why Satan chose to embody a serpent to tempt Eve. There had to have been many other possibilities. Why not a dog or a cat? This would seem more logical.

Though little is given about it in the Bible, there was unquestionably an early enchantment with snakes. In almost every pagan worship center that has come to light as a result of archaeological excavations, a fascination with serpents is evident. Personally, I have seen them on fertility plaques, carved into altars, painted on pottery, formed into jar handles, and entwined around cult stands.

At Beersheba a few years ago, our archaeological team discovered the only horned sacrificial altar that has been found so far. It was exactly the dimensions of an altar described in the Bible, five cubits by five cubits by three cubits (see Ex. 38:1). It had been dismantled and the stones reused for the construction of a wall during the time of King Hezekiah, who ruled from 729 BC.

Since Hezekiah was such a good king, and since the celebration of the Passover in Jerusalem helped to bring about a great revival, we wondered why he had allowed, perhaps even ordered, this altar to be demolished in favor of a simple wall. When the unique stones of the altar were reconstructed, we noticed that on one side of a cornerstone, two snakes had been carved. It seems obvious that the altar had been paganized and for this reason it had to be destroyed.

Who knows, but perhaps all this fascination with snakes finds its origin in the garden of Eden incident.

After choosing to embody a serpent, Satan singled out Eve to tempt. Why? It was for at least two reasons. First, she did not receive the command directly from God; she got it from Adam. Receiving something secondhand is not as strong as it is if received firsthand. And second, since Eve was a woman, perhaps she possessed a little more creative ingenuity and a bit more speculative intuition. Satan thought she was an easier prey.

It would appear that the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" was not unlike other trees of the same family. However, it is certain it was not an apple tree, for apples cannot grow in the Tigris-Euphrates valley area, the place where the Bible identifies the location of the garden of Eden. It was the interpretation of medieval artists that gave rise to the apple being involved, which has caused it, even until today, to be the universal sign of temptation, especially one with a bite out of the side.

If the tree was not an apple tree, what kind was it? While it really makes no difference, it is likely that it was a date palm or a fig tree. In any case, God simply chose to use that particular tree as a test of obedience for Eve. It was to determine if Eve would follow God's instructions (His laws) or do her own thing. Eve could have ingested fruit from another tree that looked and tasted the same, and there would have been no ill effect. It is clear from the text that the fruit on that one tree was not poisonous to the body. But eating of it against God's order would cause an inner, spiritual explosion to occur.

Understanding Sin

The divine-human partnership that began in the garden is immediately seen as having a higher intimacy than the divineanimal relationship.

God made animals to act according to instinct. In a sense they were preprogrammed to "do their thing." But Adam and Eve were created with God breathing into them a life after making them in His own "image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26–27). This gave them a "personality" with its accompanying "free choice." God could have made them more marionette-like with invisible strings coming down out of heaven, directing every action and word. But such an existence would have been stilted, artificial, and affected.

God did not want shallow devotion that could only have come from a robotic existence. He knew He was losing the allegiance of many who would opt for the "wide gate" in order to have a few who would choose to enter the "narrow gate." But He wanted a relationship that would lift people higher than any animal could reach. So God allowed human beings to have a choice. As a result, sin began by a willful disobedience to a clearly given and plainly understood command of God.

Satan, mad at God, determined to "get even" for his dismissal from the heavenly court. He wanted to get back at God where it would hurt Him most—His gift of free will for humankind. He had to drive a wedge into the intimacy that existed. He could only accomplish his desire by deception and solicitation. He had to stir doubt in the minds of Eve and Adam by making them think God was more interested in himself than He was in them. Satan wanted them to think they could have what they were being denied by simply taking it, even though in so doing they would be directly disobeying God.

An Obedience Test

Following God's dictum, Eve at first seems to have ignored the tree, considering it out of bounds and not suitable for food. Trusting God's restrictions to be right, it never bothered her as to why it was taboo.

But now, as a result of Satan's suggestive, but evil, logic, Eve looked at the tree for the first time, interestedly. His argument followed this line: "Do you know why God doesn't want you to eat from that tree? Not because He cares about you! But because it will be bad for Him! He's not looking out for you. He's self-ishly considering what is best for Him, looking out for himself. Everyone has to do that; you might as well do it too."

Such a rationale could not be further from the truth. God has no agenda to protect His interests. Being all-powerful, He needs none. His total focus is what is best for us. His laws are not fences to hold us in but to keep evil away.

When we take our trust from God, thinking for the slightest moment that when God speaks or acts He does not have our best interest at heart, we open ourselves up to all kinds of twists of logic that only lead away from the truth. The moment Eve began to take her trust from God, she then looked at the fruit of the tree with different eyes.

Eve saw that the fruit was "pleasing to the eye," would be "good for food," and would make her gain "wisdom" (Gen. 3:6). As she looked, in reality, she saw the beautiful, the good, and the true. She thought to herself, "There it is! All I really want out of life. Why is God keeping it from me? I guess Satan was right. God must care more about himself than He cares about me. Why should I not taste of it? What can be wrong with the beautiful, the good, and the true?"

When Eve flippantly took her trust away from God, a result of having given ear to the evil counsel of Satan, it became easier for her not to believe what God had told her. This was so because distrust always breeds disbelief. "If I can't trust God, then I can't believe what He says," she reasoned.

The place where every Christian must begin the odyssey of faith is, "God has my best interest at heart. I know because He says so in His Word. Therefore, I can trust all of His commands."

If one harbors for the slightest moment the idea that "God has designed laws to withhold something from me that I want, even what I deserve," he has stepped away from the path of faith. At the point where he thinks, "God cares more about himself than He does about me," he has turned from the high road of trust to the low road that leads to distrust, to disbelief, and finally to disaster.

Sin's Two Methods of Operation

All sin begins with disobedience to what God has said to do or not to do. It is a violation of His instruction. It can happen in two main ways.

Sin Is First a Premature Taking Of Something Before We Are Ready for It

I recall incidents from my childhood when, sometimes at 3:00 in the afternoon, I would ask my mother for a candy bar. The answer was always, "No, it will spoil your dinner." I never could understand that logic. How could a candy bar make my food spoil? It would taste the same no matter when I ate it! I couldn't see that the candy bar taken before mealtime would have a dramatic effect on my appetite.

My mother was not denying me the candy bar because it was bad food. She would often say, "You may have it after you have eaten your meal, but not before." She knew that the quality of the candy bar and the quality of the food at the meal would not be affected with the eating or not eating of the candy at that particular time. But she also knew that my desire for more nourishing food would diminish, and if such a practice continued it would be injurious to my health.

My mother was not denying my request out of her own best interest, but out of mine. She knew that I would be the one hurt and her denial, we might term it "her law," was borne of what she knew would be best for me.

It would seem that if Eve had kept her trust in God and had not listened to Satan's skewed reasoning, the day would have come when the Lord would have said to her, "Now Eve, by following my instructions, you are ready for the fruit. Go eat all of it you want. Obedience has prepared you in such a way that the fruit now will not hurt you; it will rather help you. Eat to your heart's delight."

Eve was not ready for the food of that tree at the point of the temptation because she was about to take it in disobedience. This was the reason for God's denial of it at that particular time. She would only be ready for the fruit when she would no longer have to take it in violation of God's command.

There is a world of difference between our taking something and something taking us, a great chasm between our having something and something having us, or our owning something and something owning us. In each case the former is desired; the latter is always to be shunned. God always seeks to prevent such from happening. It occurs when the legitimate assumes illegitimate control, or when what was intended by God to serve us instead becomes our master.

Since sin is always so pervasive, so cunning, so deceptive, and so subtle, we may not know the point at which such a change starts to occur. God does. His moral laws are designed to protect us from passing that line; we must always defer to His knowledge.

Sin Is Also a Misuse of Something God Intended for Good Purpose

This was not Eve's problem at the point of her sin. This is usually the next step away from God after we have disobeyed Him for what to us at the moment seemed the right time to use legitimate things.

Everything God has given has a good purpose. It was with this in mind that He gave it to us. But it is always possible to misuse, misapply, or misappropriate the gift by putting it to a purpose never intended by God. To give a specific illustration, God never intended for tobacco to be inhaled or absorbed into our bodies. Unquestionably it is because it is so addictive, and in the long run, injurious to our health.

Then one might ask, "If God knew it would be detrimental, why did He make it available to us?" Maybe it is because it is one of the best moth repellents around. It probably cannot be used for that purpose today lest the user, by the odor accompanying him, be assumed to be a smoker. If the modern tobacco industry would spend some of its profit on research to determine what other good purposes their product could viably serve, there would likely be dozens of other areas where it would be of benefit.

A case can be made that God did not intend alcohol to be ingested for it dulls the senses, slows reaction time, makes one less responsible, and more apt to commit other sins. If four beers makes one drunk and out of control, then one beer makes one one-fourth

drunk and one-fourth out of control. If alcohol today were given the stringent tests required of any other drug before it could be approved for consumption, it would fail miserably on every level.

What was God's purpose for making it available to us? It seems likely that it was for the purpose of preservation and disinfection. Consumed in the human body it does little of either.

It is then *most important* to realize that God is most concerned about what is best for us. This being so, it follows then that we too should be most interested in what is best for us. Anything that erodes, effaces, or destroys the priceless thing called personality, God opposes. Neither does He approve of anything that makes us lose control. Whatever God opposes is sin, no matter whether it is taking something before we are ready for it or a misuse of something God intended for a good purpose.

Eve was most fascinated by what she presumed she was missing out on at that present moment. God's instruction had more of the future effect in mind than it did the present denied pleasure. The sinner gives less and less regard to what will happen tomorrow as a result of what he is doing today. His philosophy is quite simply, "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

Then, properly considered, the sinner often mortgages his future by spending tomorrow's assets today. In contrast, by biblical direction, the Christian is told not to damage the future in any way by what is done today. So in comparison to the sinner, the Christian, by living a disciplined life, following biblical principles, and making some sacrifices, invests each day into tomorrow. He is able, then, to watch each tomorrow grow bigger with more options, more opportunities, and more happiness. In short, the sinner's tomorrow shrinks; the Christian's tomorrow expands. In the end, of the two, the Christian is happier.

Horace Mann, an American educator of nearly two centuries ago, once wrote, "In vain do they talk of happiness who never subdued an impulse in obedience to a principle. He who never sacrificed a present to a future good, or a personal to a general one, can speak of happiness only as the blind do of colors."

God's Solution: Laws to Live By

When God created the human family, His "dilemma" was, "How can I help people not to take good things before they are ready for them? How can I make people not misuse good things by making them serve the wrong purposes? How can I make people more self-less, more mindful of others, more giving in their lifestyle? How can I make them have a higher self-image until they see themselves as living on too high a level of life to allow themselves to sin?"

God needed a way that would stop the downward pull of sin's whirlpool and reverse the downward slide of self-respect. He had to have a way of not only forgiving the sin committed, but also of providing a way to minimize its effect on the sinner. In the Old Testament He did this by instituting a set of laws to live by.

God wanted these laws to be succinctly stated, but yet to be all-encompassing. He wanted them to cover both people's responsibility to themselves and their responsibility to others. He wanted these commandments to be strong enough to show all people the effects that the fall had on them. He wanted them to see how helpless they were in trying to live up to the standard these laws required. He wanted all people to see the evil core they had inside themselves, which often made them their own worst enemies. He wanted to show everyone how much they needed what only He could give—forgiveness and cleansing.

The Old Testament Solution: A Sacrifice

After Adam and Eve sinned, and as long as time will last, forgiveness will always be our greatest need. The forgiveness that is needed could only come about through the death of something or someone innocent, who would be willing to bear our punishment.

At first this was done by the sacrifice of an animal, which, because of its innocence and by means of this sacrifice, could atone for the sins of the guilty party. Only innocent blood could atone for the guilt of sin. We do not know when this began, but there is a suggestion that it occurred right after Adam and Eve sinned. We are told in Genesis 3:21 that God clothed them in the skins of animals. This implies the death of animals to meet the needs of every human.

Noah practiced the sacrifice of animals as soon as he exited the ark (see Gen. 8:20). But did people in time completely lose all their connections to the LORD?

While this may not be affirmed with certainty, it is clear from what Joshua said in his farewell speech to the people of Israel that Abraham didn't learn about God from his father and mother. He was reared in an idol-worshiping home (see Josh. 24:2). After he moved to Canaan, it is also clear that whatever had caused Abraham to come to God and abandon the idolatry of his upbringing, he wanted everyone to know that he did not trust in idols, as did all the people of the land. He built altars to the LORD at every stopping place in testimony to his faith in God (see Gen. 12:7–8; 13:4, 18).

Soon after Lot had been freed from his captors, Abraham was somewhat disappointed that his nephew had chosen to return to Sodom instead of staying with him. The LORD then instructed Abraham to take several three-year-old animals and birds (see Gen. 15:8–9)—all of which were later specified in the law to be

used for sacrificial animals—and cut them in half. Later the same night, the LORD made a covenant with Abraham to give the land of Canaan to his descendants. These animals played a part in the covenant God was establishing with Abraham.

Was this all possibly symbolic of the One who was to come? Was atonement somehow involved? We are not told, but in the same context Abraham is told of the eventual coming of his descendants to the land of Canaan (see Gen. 15:16). Redemption from bondage is prefigured here, for it took a Paschal Lamb's blood to make it possible.

It would seem that Abraham was being schooled in God's grand design for the whole human race. But this "father of the faith" had to be schooled in trust because he had little if any training and background in following God. Yet it must be understood that while it was necessary for Abraham to grow *in* faith, he could not grow *into* faith. Faith produces results at the point of confession, and instantaneous conversion results.

In Abraham's day sacrifices were being done at altars, but they were made mainly to placate the anger of gods who were thought to lose their tempers for one reason or another. When the people became most desperate, they would sacrifice their own children to their deity.

Abraham needed to learn that there is a right kind of sacrifice to be made, and there is also a wrong kind. Innocent animals are acceptable, even desired, but not innocent children. Later God made this clear to Moses in the law given on Sinai (see Lev. 10:1–5). But being so new to the faith, Abraham had to be given the truth in a way more suitable to his own personal need.

It seems certain that Abraham would have gone through with the sacrifice of Isaac if the LORD had not provided a substitute. But the substitute was provided, and it was a ram, the very animal later specified to atone for a sinner who had committed willful sins (see Lev. 5:14–16).

Was not God also giving to Abraham, and to all the world through the Scripture, a picture in prophecy of what was to come? In the mind of Abraham his only son was already "dead" as he made the three-day journey it would have taken to get from Hebron to Mount Moriah. There was a sacrifice, a substitutionary one. It all occurred where centuries later pavements would run red with the blood of innocent animals to atone for the sins of the guilty. God knew this was all going to have its final punctuation with the oncefor-all shedding of the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, near the same spot.

There is a greater lesson in this situation with Abraham, for him and for us as well. It was a lesson that life is meaningless without love—a love that is properly focused on the One who is the embodiment of perfect love. A love-generated plan of redemption through a sacrifice was not an afterthought or a simple adjustment after the fall. It was not plan B after plan A had failed. God had written this lesson plan long before the creation of the world (see Eph. 1:4–10).

God could have made people robots and preprogrammed them to want only Him. But love would not allow God to make us without allowing alternative choices to himself. God knew we would sin, so He planned that His unlimited love would be presented as an option. It was one that would hopefully elicit a similar love in response. The kind of love God would receive was important to Him.

In Abraham's situation, God was helping him clarify the kind of love he had for his Maker in comparison to the kind of love he had for Isaac. In effect, God was saying to Abraham, "This test is designed to help you know if you love Me because of what I have done for you, or if you love Me because of who I am."

Why was this so crucial to Abraham? If his love was based on God's performance alone, it would weaken when at some point God would not perform the way Abraham expected. If Abraham's love was based on God as a person, the love would hold strong regardless of God's acts.

To illustrate, any marriage that is based on performance—such as cleaning the house, cooking, earning a decent living, or whatever else might be "done"—would not last through times of illness or other incapacity to perform. A love that is person-based will grow even stronger when there is an inability to perform expected duties because it is based on who the person is intrinsically and not on what actions one can do.

Why such a lesson at this time? God knew His plan to give His Son in love—to become a human being—would soon be necessary to fulfill the law. He wanted to show what kind of love response would be required. No matter how perfect the law was, it could only be fulfilled in Christ.

Until then, His laws were given to maintain civil order, ensure proper ceremonial procedures, promote good health practices, and foster good morality.

UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL LAW



We concluded the lesson in the last chapter by talking about the Old Testament sacrificial system. It required the blood of innocent animals to cover the sins of guilty sinners. The system had to suffice, as imperfect as it was, until God's "fulness of the time" (Gal. 4:4 KJV) came. Then He could send Jesus to fulfill that plan.

Changeable Laws

Until Jesus came, God relied on a system of laws to maintain civil order, ensure proper ceremonial procedures, promote good health practices, and foster good morality. The laws governing the first three of these categories—civil, ceremonial, and health—would necessarily have to be applied in a temporary way to meet the needs of the specific situations that existed at that time. What would be injurious to health then would not be so in later times.

What laws may have been required for orderly ceremonies then would necessarily change if the ceremonial practices changed. The same could be said for civil laws.

To illustrate, today we have a civil law that allows for a right turn on a red light at an intersection after a stop, if no traffic is oncoming. Such a law would have been useless then with few intersections and no red lights. A law in Old Testament times that would limit speed to fifty-five miles per hour would also have been meaningless, since camels and donkeys could not go quite that fast!

This should help us understand why there seems to be some very strange laws in the Old Testament that, for the most part, are now archaic. No one today is expected to follow them, though some very orthodox Jews may.

Archaic Old Testament Laws

Here are some examples: "When you build a new house, make a parapet around your roof so that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your house if someone falls from the roof" (Deut. 22:8).

People at that time built small houses with rooms as small as six by ten feet. Their roofs were flat. In time, these became conveniently usable as extensions to their living quarters, accessed by a simple ladder or stairs constructed on the inside or the outside. The reason for using the roof was not only to provide more space. At certain times of the day it was cooler there.

We can tell much about such houses from the description given of the house in Jericho where the Moabite king Eglon had his local headquarters. It was there where Eglon received the judge Ehud, who was bringing him the tribute payment the Moabite enemy had forced on the Hebrews. This house had not only a "private chamber" on the roof, but it also had toilet facilities available to the king. We know this to be so since Ehud had time to escape only because the king's bodyguards assumed the king was "covering his feet"—the Hebrew way of saying, they thought he was in the restroom (see Judg. 3:20–25 KJV).

This law concerning the parapet was meant to make the owner take more responsibility concerning the safety of guests, who might be visiting "upstairs" and accidentally fall from the roof if no wall surrounded it. Almost no one today would think of building a house with a flat roof containing living quarters, so the law is ignored. That in no way means that people today can be negligent concerning the safety of others. The designs have changed, but we still have laws to ensure the safety of other people.

Deuteronomy 22:10 orders farmers not to "plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together." Besides the fact that nearly all farmers use tractors today and would not even consider using such animals, the Bible was concerned about cruelty to animals. It would be most difficult for these two animals to work together.

Consider also Deuteronomy 22:11: "Do not wear clothes of wool and linen woven together." Is there anyone today who would insist that any garment of mixed types of thread should not be worn by Christians? It is highly unlikely. Clothes blended with Dacron and cotton wear longer and wrinkle far less than material that is made of only cotton.

We need to ask though, why was such a law important at that time? It seems probable that in numerous ways there was always a great danger of God's people copying the evil habits and practices of the pagan Canaanites. It may well be presumed that in the minds of these people such garments were directly associated with their religious ideas of fertility and sexual immorality, thus God opposed the use of such combinations in materials.

Consider the law of Deuteronomy 22:12, where "tassels" were required "on the four corners of the cloak you wear." No one except "letter-of-the-law" Jews requires this today.

God was also very concerned about the maintenance of health in Old Testament times. Pork was forbidden as a meat for consumption, not because it was bad for every follower of God, but because it was *bad at that time*. It did not come from an animal that met both the required "split hoof" and "cud chewing" requirement (see Deut. 14:6–8). Why is it then that bacon, ham, and pork are eaten by most Christians today and they do not consider it wrong or injurious to their health?

Moreover, though rabbit meat is one of the best meats that can be consumed today (it is very low in cholesterol), it was forbidden in the law (see Deut. 14:7). A rabbit chewed a cud but did not have split hooves. One may wonder why God would consider the feet and the chewing habits of animals important considerations in the consumption of flesh.

While pork is a healthy meat to eat, if poorly cooked or badly preserved, it is indeed unwise to ingest. It can cause trichinosis, a deadly food poison. Also, without refrigeration it is unsafe for human consumption. If rabbit meat is consumed in warmer weather, it is highly likely it may carry a deadly bacterium called tularemia—or "rabbit fever." In Bible lands, where it so seldom frosts, it is never wise to eat the meat of a rabbit.

Unchangeable Moral Laws

The moral laws in the Old Testament *do not change*. They are as essential to contentment and fulfillment today as they were then.

These laws should be looked at in the same way one views the laws of nature. As an example, consider the law of gravity. No one would think of saying, "This law is a nineteenth-century law. I now live in the twenty-first century. The law of gravity is an old law. I don't need to obey it. I'll just climb this tall building and jump down to prove that this law does not apply to me."

Whatever the rationale used by that person, if he jumps he will not bounce when he hits the ground. He will splatter! He will not break the law of gravity. He will break himself against the law of gravity! So too, we do not break the moral law; we only break ourselves against it, to our own detriment.

These moral laws, summed up in the Ten Commandments, cannot be open to individual interpretation and application. No one must be allowed to step up to God's counter and say, "Now I will obey this law, but that one doesn't apply to me. I'll disregard it." They were, and are, all to be regarded and observed in the last age, in this age, or in any age if people are to happily maximize their own God-given potential.

Casuistic or Case Laws

Up to the present time, at least eight law codes that applied to different peoples in times past have come to light in whole or in part through archaeological discoveries. Some of them are very fragmentary; others are more complete. It is clear that all of them have laws stated in a similar fashion. The legislation that proved to be most effective was called casuistic law, sometimes referred to as case law.

This type of law is stated in the third person singular. It begins with an "if," showing that it is conditional, and is very specific concerning the infraction to which it is aimed. Then there always follows the punishment that is to be administered to the violator. Many of the laws of the Bible are stated in this way. Sometimes it is the most effective way to express a law because the civil punishment can be delineated quite clearly.

The set of laws most often compared to biblical law is the Code of Hammurabi, a king of the early Babylonian kingdom who ruled from 1792–1750 BC. There is great similarity between the two, but in general the biblical laws are more merciful, more liberal, and more considerate of equal justice. Exceptions are when an action taken will damage the priceless, personal, and God-given asset of "personality," or when the invaluable structure of the "family" is threatened. In these instances, biblical law is usually harsher.

In both systems, however, laws were often more strict than is the case in our day. The reason for this is that society was far more primitive and elementary. It lacked in development, maturity, and sophistication, and laws accordingly had to be more exact and more threatening. It was somewhat similar to the relationship of a parent to a child. Instructions are far more frequently given and specifically defined for nearly everything when the child is small, compared to when he is older and has learned more. There are many more "don'ts" given at the early stage of life than there are when the child is older and understands far more.

To illustrate, in Hammurabi's Code, the very first law stated is, "If a citizen has accused a citizen and has indicted him for a

murder and has not substantiated the charge, his accuser shall be put to death." Since society then was based far more on oral statements alone, the danger of falsely accusing someone, as children might do today to escape punishment or to "get even," was much more serious. As a result, the punishment needed to be more severe to keep people honest. Because of the severity of the law, it is doubtful that very many people made false accusations that could not be proven.

Apodictic Laws

To show the more advanced position of the Bible and its more advanced enlightenment, the law given for a similar infraction was stated in what is called an apodictic manner, with no punishment being delineated. Exodus 23:7 simply stated, "Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty."

Notice that in this type of law, the tense is in the more direct second person singular ("You shall not!"). It is far more inclusive, and has the sense of, "Don't you ever, under any circumstance, for any reason, at any place, or at any time do thus and so." Never is there a punishment stated to tell what will occur if the command is violated. This type of law is only found in the Bible. It is the unique contribution of God's Word to society. The only place in history where something similar is found is in a treaty drawn up by a victor over his vanquished enemy, wherein is stated a set of limits, such as, "You shall do this, and this, and this. You shall not do this, and this, and this,"

Trial by Ordeal

Again Hammurabi's Code states, "If a citizen has indicted a citizen for sorcery and does not substantiate the charge, the one who is indicted for sorcery shall go to the river and shall throw himself in. If the river overwhelms him, [then] his indicter shall take away his house. If the river exculpates that citizen and he is preserved, the one who indicted him for sorcery shall die, [and] the one who threw himself into the river shall take away his house."

What is described here is a law where the punishment prescribed is a "trial by ordeal." The guilt or innocence is decided by the ordeal of being thrown into the Euphrates River, apparently with hands tied. If the accused drowned, he was guilty; if he lived, he was considered innocent, and he was then compensated for his ordeal by being awarded the property of the one who falsely accused him.

There is indeed a law covering a similar situation in the Bible, but it is far more advanced than such a primitive treatment of the accused. It is found in Deuteronomy 19:15: "One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

Though this apodictic law is not stated in the normal second person singular, it has the same force, and again no punishment is delineated. In His justice, the LORD recognized the need for witnesses to establish the guilt of an individual.

There is one law mentioned in the Bible that some have labeled "trial by ordeal," but to this writer it is labeled somewhat incorrectly. It is found in Numbers 5:11–31. It involves a situation where there would likely be no witnesses. A husband suspects his

wife is guilty of adultery. He is to bring her before the priest, who then brings her "before the Lord" (v. 16). She must endure a procedure which in that day would have made anyone guilty readily confess or act in such a way as to belie the guilt.

It should be emphasized that in this situation the one accused is "innocent until proven guilty," as opposed to the person in the Hammurabi Code where the one accused is "guilty until proven innocent."

In such situations in that day, a guilty person was more likely to be discovered by such a procedure than would be the case today. They were not as sophisticated, not as cagey, not as experienced, and therefore more susceptible to being caught in that kind of ordeal.

This story should prove the point. Some years ago a teacher of a first grade class was aware of a student having taken an item from another, but she did not know for sure who was guilty. After endeavoring unsuccessfully to gain a confession, she came upon an idea of how to make the thief reveal his own identity.

Before she sent the children to the lunch room, she told them she was going to prepare a test that they would have to take when they returned, one that she believed would determine who was guilty. While they were away, she turned a galvanized wash tub upside down and placed it in the long narrow cloakroom adjacent to the classroom. There were no windows in the room, but there were entrance and exit doors that provided adequate illumination. She turned off the overhead light. On the top of the tub she spread lampblack, which in the dim light could not be detected by the children.

When the children returned, the guilty one having had plenty of time to consider his theft and worry about the test, the teacher informed them of the tub. She then told each child to enter the room alone, one at a time. While in the room, each was to think about whether or not he or she was guilty, then touch the top of the tub with the palm of the hand.

After all had gone through the room, the teacher then told all students to hold up the hands that had touched the tub. When they raised them, they were all black but one. The guilty student had thought to himself, "She said she would find out who was guilty by this test. I'll fool her. I won't touch the tub." His guilt caused him to get caught.

Such a test would probably not work with adults today, but with the childish knowledge and demeanor of adults in that day, the ordeal of the one accused being thrown in the river caused the guilty person to be revealed. He likely didn't even try to survive, knowing he was guilty. He felt himself trapped in the ordeal.

Marriage, Adultery, and the Family

The sin of adultery was, and always will be, destructive to the family institution. It always damages the mental, physical, and psychological health of the husband, wife, and children who make up the family. The biblical law was intended to protect both husband and wife from destroying the unit upon which their future contentment depended. In Hammurabi's Code there seems to have been little concern about adultery.

It is noteworthy that the Hammurabi Code also gave more emphasis to economic considerations than does the Bible. For example, consider these laws:

"If a citizen has been carried away captive, and there is sustenance in his house, his wife . . . shall guard her property and shall not enter the household of another. If that wife does not guard her property but enters into the household of another, they shall convict his wife and cast her into the water. [But] if a citizen has been carried away captive, and there is no sustenance in his house, his wife may enter into another household, and no crime may be imputed to this woman."

Biblical law was far more considerate of the people in similar situations, though it did not give nearly as much regard to economic considerations. In the case of a recently married couple, God did not want the newlyweds to jeopardize their contentment in the event of war. Notice: "If a man is recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring contentment to the wife he has married" (Deut. 24:5).

In the case of children being submissive to their parents, the Hammurabi Code was severe. It stated, "If a son has struck his father, they shall cut off his hand." But, recognizing the threat disobedient children would be in the future to themselves, as well as to society, the biblical law was even more severe. It states, "Anyone who attacks his father or his mother must be put to death" (Ex. 21:15). It seems highly unlikely that there were very many children going about with one hand amputated, nor were there many if any who would smite a parent. Both laws were serious enough to prevent the infraction.

Milk and Meat Consumption

One of the laws in the Old Testament most difficult to understand is found in three places, which emphasizes its importance to the Israelites. It is found in Exodus 23:19; 34:26; and again in Deuteronomy 14:21. It is given in the apodictic form: "Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk."

In not one of the three incidents is found a context that gives the slightest hint as to why such an act was considered wrong. For centuries, Jews have interpreted the injunction to mean that no meat or meat product should be eaten together with any milk or milk product at any one meal. Even today, especially in Israel whether one is a Jew or not, it is not possible to eat the two together in a kosher restaurant. Separate dishes, silverware, pots, and pans are to be used for the different diets. Even in the kitchens will be found separate sinks to wash the dishes of the two diets. Most hotels have different dining rooms used to serve the foods of the different diets.

Is that what the Lord intended? Jesus was speaking against such practices when He said, "Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean'" (Mark 7:15).

The Problem Solved

The information that emerged as a result of a Syrian farmer plowing his field in 1928 led me to a theory as to why this law was considered so important as to have it recorded in three places in the Old Testament. His plow happened to catch on a flagstone under the soil. After several attempts to reset his plow so his ox could pull through the spot, he upended the stone. It opened a subterranean passageway to an underground tomb.

The farmer found the tomb to contain some valuable pottery, which he knew he could turn into cash. He took it to the nearest antique market and sold it. Ultimately, all of this came to the attention of the director of the Antiquities Department of the country. Later, when some archaeological work was done on the site, it was determined to be an early Greek tomb. Enough information

emerged to indicate that a long lost city, named Ugarit, had to be nearby.

Archaeological work was begun on a mound not far from the tomb, and after several seasons of digging, it was determined Ugarit had at last been found. Numerous clay tablets were unearthed on which poetry was written about Baal, the god of the ancient Canaanites.

In one poem entitled "The Birth of the Great and Beautiful God," two lines are found which read, "Mix a kid in milk, blend a goat in butter." This was an edict in direct opposition to the prohibition found in the Bible. It is now thought to have been related to a "magical milk charm" practiced by these pagan people. It was a practice in which they killed an offspring of a mother goat, and after blending it with its mother's milk, offered it to Baal as an inducement to fertility. The food was then eaten by the "worshipers," completing the pagan ritual.

It seems likely that the LORD wanted to spare the Israelites from an easy slide into idolatry by prohibiting a food regimen that, while otherwise safe, led to evil practices in the Canaanite culture of the time.

Why Laws with No Punishments Are Given

A question that needs to be asked is, why are apodictic laws only found in the Bible? And why is there never a punishment stated?

It is my contention that such a type of law was given in instances where the punishment that ensues is the automatic end result of the sin itself. In other words, the sin has the punishment built within it. It is automatic. It is like the rubber ball on the end of the elastic line. When it is batted away, it returns just as quickly to strike the one who first hit it away.

Numerous passages in the Bible verify this end result of certain sinful actions on the part of people. Here are a few.

- "But whoever fails to find me harms himself' (Prov. 8:36).
- "Your own conduct and actions have brought this upon you" (Jer. 4:18).
- "Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you" (Jer. 2:19).
- "For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them" (Prov. 1:32).
- "But am I the one they are provoking? declares the LORD. Are they not rather harming themselves, to their own shame?" (Jer. 7:19).
- "The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves" (Isa. 3:9).

There are certain sins one can do that may affect only himself, for which, especially in a free society, he cannot be punished by the legal authorities. In Old Testament times, when everyone lived in such close proximity and the results of one's actions affected the entire community, laws had to be more strict and more rigidly enforced.

An example would be in the case of homosexual behavior. It could not be allowed by anyone, even by what is termed today "consenting adults." A death penalty was mandatory. Few today would advocate that such a sin should be punished by taking that person's life.

However, the emotional damage, the personality scars, the anti-family end result, as well as the numerous kinds of sexually

transmitted diseases—such as herpes, chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhea, and AIDS—all are built-in punishments for the sin committed. If society would live by the Ten Commandments, especially the seventh one, these "built-in" punishments would disappear in one or two generations.

Were these diseases known in Old Testament times? The answer is most emphatically "Yes!" With the wide open, promiscuous, and unbridled immoral sexual practices, even sex with animals, the incidence of plagues of epidemic proportions were always present. But with no modern names to label the different infections, they were lumped into the broad category of "leprosy."

Could this not be the clear reason why sometimes the Israelites were given the command, as to Joshua at Jericho, and to Saul with respect to the Amalekites, not to spare any man, woman, child, animal, or garment among the enemy? It was not that God was cruel in the Old Testament, but rather it was the only way to save society from committing a type of personal suicide by engaging in immorality. More will be said about this in chapter nine.

CONCLUSION



ECONOMIC AND MORAL LOGIC

It was mentioned earlier that in modern-day culture and on certain occasions, lying is acceptable. If the end result is thought to be needed or if one needs to spare another person emotional hurt, then lying is in order. This sometimes makes it more difficult to be truthful, especially when it is not popular to do so.

Society's view in general makes it harder for a Christian to pursue a lifestyle that blends easily with all ten of the commandments. It is hoped that this study has helped to underscore the necessity of obeying the commandments if we hope to preserve and expand our happiness.

There is another aspect of society today that causes pressure on Christian conduct that is not generally recognized. It has to do with the relationship of economic logic with moral logic.

Compare for a moment my father's day to our day. For him, economic logic and moral logic were most often parallel. They

both had similar ends. Moral logic was, "Don't do something today that will be regretted tomorrow." And economic logic was similar, "Don't encumber yourself financially so as to cheat yourself from economic independence in your old age." My father was especially concerned about avoiding financial poverty after he retired.

So it was a normal practice for him to refrain from contracting too large a debt, or any at all if he could avoid it. He did not want to have to "beg" when he retired. He wanted financial independence in his old age. He wanted his house and car paid for. Therefore, as a family we always had an older car and did not live in quite as nice a house as we might have had. As it happened, Dad did not have to pay so much of his income on interest. He sought to manage debt economically as he sought to manage his life spiritually. Each of these two areas then had similar goals and being thus related, both were easier to do.

Few today espouse the similar economic logic, "Make a few sacrifices today so you will be able to have more tomorrow." Financial institutions, for example, are saying in numerous ways, "Spend tomorrow's assets today. Why wait? You can have it all now." The present generation has little concern about how much interest they have to pay on a desired loan, or the length of time involved before the loan has to be repaid.

All they want to know is the total amount of the monthly payment, not the interest rate nor how long the loan will last! Just, how much will it cost them per month? Though such a debt does give them a bit more in the short run, it is gained at the loss of a lot more in the long run.

So today economic logic is in contrast to the traditional moral logic. Very often, as a direct result of current economic logic, many churches are suffering financially. Why? Because many of the

members are encumbering themselves with debt in such large amounts that members cannot find enough money to offer their tithe to the church.

This is not to condemn all debt, for most people would not be able to buy a house at all without some debt. But debt must be contracted wisely for the right things, and in a balanced and affordable amount, so as not to be denied more in the future.

I was told about a young plumber who, though good at his profession, could not always find enough work to pay all the bills, one of which was his house payment. So during lean months, when he did not have enough money to make ends meet, he simply used his MasterCard to make the mortgage payment. This continued for several years and the credit card company conveniently raised his charge limit as long as he continued to make small payments, including the growing interest due each month. Unfortunately, the credit card was used for house payments so often that ultimately the unpaid balance reached more than \$25,000, with monthly interest payments alone surpassing \$500 per month.

Needless to say, the young man finally lost his house and now has to rent from a landlord

Such a practice should not be permitted for the customer's best interest. With a debt-driven economy such as today's, credit card companies and financial institutions, through advertising, entice some people to go with an economic logic that encourages them to be fiscally irresponsible. With such logic it also becomes easier to be less accountable in other areas of life.

Economic Logic in the Old Testament

In Old Testament times, God recognized this tendency to accumulate too much debt. He established unique economic

laws that encouraged everyone to be debt free by the end of every sixth year—the beginning of the sabbatical year. If that failed, a person could pay off debt by leasing, not selling, his property. The maximum time limit for debt for the entire economy was never to be longer than a forty-nine-year period—the beginning of the Jubilee year—the time when all debt (especially leased land) had to be eliminated. This then would have occurred at least once in every person's working lifetime.

If a farmer got into financial difficulty and he had already indentured himself to work for another person until the end of the next sabbatical (seven-year period), and it was the forty-second year since the last Jubilee (another seven to go until the next), he could "sell" his land to another farmer. The "buyer" in turn could only use the land for the next six years, after which time he would have to return it to its original owner debt free. In reality, value was placed on the use of the land rather than the land itself.

Did the Lord know something that we have overlooked, which happens when economic and moral logic separate? A study of the last two centuries reveal that in this country we have had either a deep depression or a severe recession about every fifty years. There was one in 1880, another in 1929, and the last major downturn was in October 1987, when the Dow Jones Industrial lost 23 percent of its value in one day. In this last incident, the reckoning was delayed seven years by encouraging debt and easing interest rates. This was done with innovation sometimes. For example, automobile dealers would charge an additional \$1000 for a car, then "return it" as if it was a "cash back" to the buyers. This was a neat economic trick to give down payment money to those not having it. It kept a depression from coming, but it stimulated a tremendous rise in private debt that still has not abated.

At the time of the writing of this book, a large ad is in the daily newspaper advocating that people "lease" a car rather than buy it. The ad asks, "Why does it make good economic sense to lease a car instead of buying it? Quite simply because it's cheaper." That just is not true! There is a smaller payment each month, but at the end of the lease the buyer owns nothing! He actually has paid out and lost more money than he would have if he had bought it and paid interest each month. He then would have something of value to show for his investment after the payments stop. It is not so with leasing. Leasing instead of buying is not at all "cheaper," but many thousands are doing it. The dealers are pushing it simply because it helps them sell cars to people who are not willing to contract more debt now, but at the expense of having much more later.

A Sinner Disregards His Influence on Others

It is clear that one of Satan's first concerns is to make a sinner give little consideration to what ill effect his actions will have on others, often his own children. The devil makes a person feel that he can do whatever he wants without worrying about "influence."

King David apparently believed he could commit his act of adultery without it influencing his children in any way. Yet they copied his sins and may have been encouraged in doing so by their being aware of what he did when they were younger.

First, Amnon took advantage of his half-sister Tamar. Later, Absalom killed Amnon for his crime. David's lack of forgiveness of Absalom seems to have made his son choose to "get even." Absalom nearly succeeded in overthrowing David. Then in time, Adonijah tried to take the throne without David's blessing, which

ultimately seems to have brought about his death at the hands of Solomon.

One also wonders what influence David's conduct of having multiple wives had upon Solomon's decision to follow suit and take it to the greatest degree.

King Jehoshaphat, certainly one of the best kings of Judah in the period of the divided monarchy, made that momentous decision to join forces with the evil King Ahab of Israel in the ill-fated battle of Ramoth Gilead. Ahab had been told by the prophet Micaiah that he would die if he fought (see 1 Kings 22:1–28). Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, later married Athaliah, the daughter of the evil Ahab and Jezebel (see 2 Kings 8:18). That union may have been the way the two kings sealed their treaty, for that was often the custom at the time.

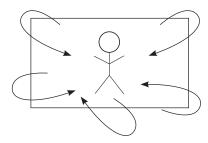
The evil influence of Athaliah on Jehoram led to his causing the death of his six brothers (see 2 Chron. 21:4). After Jehoram died, Athaliah, his wife, decided she would take over the throne even though she was not in the messianic line as a direct descendant of King David. To do so safely, she gave the order that all her grandchildren had to be killed so she could rule uncontested (see 2 Chron. 22:10). Jehoram's only son, Ahaziah, was killed while visiting his wounded uncle. It is safe to observe that had it not been for the wise counsel of Jehoiada, the high priest, to save the one-year-old grandson, Joash, from being murdered and hiding him in the temple for six years, the messianic line of King David would have come to an end.

It is sobering to realize that all this came about as the result of a decision of one of the most godly kings in the entire Old Testament period, Jehoshaphat, to join forces with Ahab at Ramoth Gilead. If only Jehoshaphat had just a glimpse of the effects his decision would have not only on his own family, but on God's ultimate plan for the human race, perhaps biblical history might have taken a different course. He seems rather to have had concern only for himself and with his present situation.

The World's "I Own" and "I Owe"

Sin causes one to become increasingly self-centered, and less and less others-centered.

IOWN



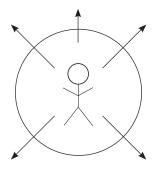
A person can live in one of two worlds: a selfless world or a self-centered world. The latter can best be described as a "Pagan World." It is the world of "I Own." It can be labeled a "square world." It is the world of self-centered fulfilment. Its occupant thinks, "This is my world. I don't owe anyone anything. My own contentment is all-important. I must look out for what I think is best for me."

In life's focus and direction—in outlook and drive, in ends and goals—the person who walks in this world finds "self" taking precedence over all else. There is an accompanying disregard for how others will be affected by actions taken. If he steps out of his world, it is only when he assumes he can benefit by it. He wants

friends, but friendship is sought only from those who can serve his ultimate purposes, who can make a contribution to his life, who can enter his "square."

In time it is but natural for this world to shrink around the person. It ultimately becomes his own prison. Would-be friends soon begin to disappear. They feel used. They recognize that this person's world is a "one way" world, a "give me" world. They come from it feeling drained and are less and less anxious to enter it again. It is not uncommon for the person occupying it to finally say, "Why don't people like me? Why am I so lonely?"

I OWE



The other world in which one can operate is the "Christian World." It is the world of "I Owe." It is a selfless world. It is a world where people find contentment and fulfillment meeting others' needs in self-sacrificing service. One who walks in it says, "I find greatest fulfillment in helping those who need help. I must look out for what is best for others." He willingly gets out of his circle, not to bring others in, but to take a piece of himself and give it to benefit others.

It is only natural for the world of this person to grow. When he reaches out of his circle, it is to offer a piece of himself and invest

it in others. His world expands, enlarges, and he never wants for friendship. He is well liked. His friendship is sought by all and he finds happiness.

The apostle Paul gives clarity to the need for operating out of the "I Owe" world in his admonition to the Philippians: "Let nothing be done through selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself" (2:3 KJV).

Sin Destroys One's Self-image

It is ironic that a sinner begins his sinful activity with the thought that he is competent enough to make his own decisions. Yet sin eats at the very thing on which all proper decisions rest—self-confidence.

Eve thought she knew easily what was in her best interest. At the moment of her sin, she believed she could rely more on her own judgment with respect to what was best for her than on God's direction.

God had wanted Eve's experience with evil to be entirely academic. She was to learn about the evil effects of sin by being told what it would do, rather than actually doing it herself. When she sinned, she knew sin experientially, something from which God had sought to protect her.

Eve must have said to herself, like all sinners after doing their sinful acts, "Why did I do that? I knew better!" And down went self-respect!

The end result is that the sinner always thinks less of himself than he did before the sin was committed. And the lower one drops in his own estimation, the more normal it seems to sin, and the greater loss of self-respect. Sinful acts seem to multiply in direct relationship to the loss of self-worth. The sinner's self-worth continues to drop until no sin seems beneath him.

God Wants Us to Be Maximally Happy

When we are in a hurry to go somewhere, stop signs and red lights, curbs and corners, no passing lanes, and speed limits are hindrances in one sense. We could arrive faster without them. Or could we? They do help us get to our intended destination safely. They keep us from being in an accident, causing injury either to ourselves or to others. These "limitations" (laws) then are in reality, our friends. We need them.

The thesis of this book has been simply that God gave the Ten Commandments to keep us from injuring ourselves, and sometimes others, not only spiritually but physically, emotionally, and psychologically. He wanted us to have a well-rounded wholeness, a maximum happiness in the future, and not do anything in word or deed that would jeopardize or restrict the fullest expression of our personal fulfilment in life, now or in the future.

There follows a chart that specifies each of the Ten Commandments. Column two gives the purpose of the commandment, the part of life God wanted to preserve for us, followed by column three, which briefly sets out the consequences that automatically follow the violation of that commandment.

APPENDIX

God's Desire for Our Maximum Happiness

God wants to protect our personality, to preserve and ensure happiness. Anything that aims at destroying the sacred quality and well-rounded wholesomeness of life is a capital offense against God, mainly because it hurts us in the long run.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer. 29:11).

Commandments Stated	Purpose for the Commandments	How We Hurt Ourselves by Breaking Them
1. No other gods	To maintain wholeness and preserve identity; internal worship	The unity of life is fractured and the personality is "split;" hypocrisy develops
2. No images	To sustain a right relationship with God and preserve external worship	A proper relationship with God is damaged; self becomes a god because it now "creates" gods
3. No name in vain	To avoid self-worship and hold to a proper respect for God	People try to manipulate God; His name becomes a cheap expression; God loses His importance in life
4. Sabbath remembrance	To promote worship; make living "holy;" foster genuine friendship	Life becomes secular, loses its meaning; values are confused; respect is seriously eroded
5. Honor parents	To foster love; reinforce respect for authority	Love decreases; contentment diminishes; abuses increase
6. No murder	To preserve the sanctity of human life	Respect for life lessens; people become "things;" children grow up to become poor parents
7. No immorality	To ensure the family unit is kept on the proper moral and spiritual level	The sanctity and unity of the family is weakened and soon destroyed; youth choose the wrong mate; divorce happens; child abuse increases
8. No stealing	To protect private property; encourage creativity; develop friendships	Initiative, creativity, and thrift are damaged; property is valued over people
9. No lying	To advance credibility, reliability, dependability	Credibility is lost; suspicion grows; trustworthiness suffers
10. No coveting	To maintain quality relationships; encourage generosity; discourage selfishness	Relationships are destroyed; attitudes sour; self-centeredness increases; personality is damaged; money becomes a god; one is encouraged to steal

General Observations

Some general observations about the commandments are in order here to better understand their study.

A. First, these "Ten Words" are found in two places in the Old Testament: Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 5:1–22. Moses was given the law, the Torah, on Mount Sinai and that Torah is summed up in the Ten Commandments. These laws were so fundamental to well-being generally, and overall, that they are given twice for added emphasis.

B. Notice also the statement in Exodus 20:1: "All these words" is deliberately connected to the phrase "And God spoke." The whole stress is that these commandments are words of revelation coming directly from God. The first emphasis is on the source from which the words come, the second emphasis is on the reason these words are given, and the third emphasis is on content (see Ex. 20:2–17).

C. Since God is not a God of speculation, He does not express himself in philosophical terms. These ten guidelines are God's will expressed in terms of moral imperatives. The Lord is a God of history, "I... brought you out of Egypt" (Ex. 20:2). In verses 3–11, He shows He is also the God of daily life.

D. There seems to be no special reason for the Lord using the number ten. The Hebrews, like most peoples, counted from base ten probably because of ten fingers. The institution of the tithe (see Gen. 28:22) shows how this basis of ten could take on a religious meaning. Twelve might have been the more obvious number, since that number is used so often (twelve tribes, twelve spies, twelve administrative districts, twelve disciples). It is ironic that the originators of mathematics, the Sumerians, actually had a mathematical system based on the number six.

E. The word commandment does not appear in connection with these laws in the text. They are called words. This should help to remove from our minds the harshness often connected with the idea of something that has to be done. This is not to say that a Christian is one so free that he is not required to follow these "words." Indeed, God did not give them as "ten suggestions" which we could take or leave. They are rather the "correct responses" that God's people have.

God intended that these ten guides for attitudes and actions should be basic to those who follow Him. But in the true sense, they are not a list of items that have to be obeyed if one is to be considered a follower of God. Rather, these are the things that followers of God do. To put it another way, these are not the rules by which one is permitted to enter the house. They are rather what the people do who are already in the house.

It is theoretically possible that one could be abiding by all ten "words" or statements and still not be a Christian, for doing them simply does not make one "saved." That takes repentance on our part and forgiveness on God's part. However, with our sinful hearts, it is not practically possible to obey these "laws." But they do indeed make one aware of how helpless he is in his own power to keep the standard God has set for him. It takes nothing short of a complete change of heart.

Many, if not most, people abide by today's laws for fear of the punishment that would result if the laws were broken and they got caught. It is the fear of the consequences of the law that keeps them law abiding. But what would happen if the consequences or fear was removed?

Imagine for a moment what would happen if the federal legislature enacted a law that after midnight January 1, there would be no more laws passed. All laws on the books would no longer be enforced. Police and sheriff's departments would be closed and no further arrests would be made for any infraction. What do you suppose would happen one minute after the stroke of midnight on that date? All chaos would break loose in society for everyone, except those who have the law written on their hearts. Their moral conduct would not vary at all. They would still observe the Ten Commandments because the diamond stylus of grace has penetrated their rock hard hearts, and now they are able to control their actions from within.

It is theoretically possible for a law to be passed that would make a person quit drinking, but there is no law possible that can prevent one from being the kind of person who needs a law to make him quit drinking. One can be prevented from stealing by a law enacted, but there is no law that can be passed that can keep one from being the kind of person that needs a law to keep from stealing.

If a society is to be orderly, it is important that the people do not steal from each other, lie to one another, or commit murder. But it is far more important that the people of that society have a central belief system that gives them the conviction that stealing, lying, and murder are wrong, always wrong, even when they are assured no punishment from society would come to them if they did it.

For people to know what is right is fundamental and critical to an orderly society, but for those people to have the power and courage to do what is right is far more important and far more essential.

This is why grace is far more fundamental than law can ever be. The law can simply tell the sinner how he should act, but without grace he simply lacks the power to make it happen. The laws did not come down from a big-robed judge, sitting in his lofty chair, with a furrowed forehead, frowning fiercely, gavel in his hand, ready to thunder forth his requirements. They were rather given by God in a most loving spirit, knowing exactly what it would take for men and women to come to Him. These laws best reflect God's own nature and His character. Since His will is for us to be like Him, these ten ingredients are a part of the mix that can make us to be like Him as far as it is humanly possible.

F. It is observed that only the fourth and fifth commandments are stated in a positive form; the other eight are all stated negatively. God could have cast them all in a positive form, but one negative command can take the place of numerous positive commands. In addition, a negative command can be given in fewer words that will more succinctly meet the evil human heart head-on.

However, even though stated in a positive way, every moral act required has another negative side which demands that something must not be done. God is not pleased at all with one who simply avoids doing a "do-not-do" thing. One could comply with that requirement by doing nothing at all. It is not inactivity that God wants. It is rather right and moral actions He desires. When God forbids any evil action, it is done with the idea in mind that the opposite good action will take its place.

G. We notice that God's requirements reach deeper than the surface of our actions. He touches the attitudes, the enticements, the pressures, the incentives, and all else that lead to a thing forbidden. In short, God is not satisfied until the heart is not only softened by grace, but has also been made pure by the touch of His Spirit. Then the heart is no longer rebelling at doing the right thing.

Areas Covered

Let us now give attention to the areas of life that God wanted to be covered with the Ten Commandments. The following chart indicates that the first three commandments are given to establish right relationship with God. The fourth commandment is to assure a proper regard for work, while the last five are directed to society in general. A right relationship with God makes it much easier to have right relationships with society.

CHART ONE			
Right Relations With God	Right Relations With Work	Right Relations With Society	
1. No other gods	4. Remember the Sabbath	5. Honor parents	
2. No images		6. No murder	
3. No name in vain		7. No immorality	
		8. No stealing	
		9. No lying	
		10. No coveting	

There is yet another way of dividing the commandments. Notice in chart two that both commandments four and five have been placed in the column of right relationship to God. Jesus made clear the importance of family relationships by referring to himself as God's Son, and to God as "Our Father."

CHART TWO			
Responsibility to God	Responsibility to Other People		
1. No other gods	6. No murder		
2. No images (idols)	7. No immorality		
3. No name in vain	8. No stealing		
4. Remember Sabbath	9. No lying		
5. Honor parents	10. No coveting		
"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37).	"Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:39).		

At the bottom of chart two are found the words spoken by Jesus to the Pharisee who was "an expert in the law" and who asked Jesus, "which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Matt. 22:34–40). Notice that the first half of the statement summarizes the first five commandments (or four as some would divide them). The last half summarizes the remainder. It is clear to see that in regard to the moral law we have been studying, Jesus did not come to destroy it but to fulfill it.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

-Matthew 5:17 (KJV)

There is no better mirror in which to see your need than the Ten Commandments. In them you will find what you lack and what you should seek.

MARTIN LUTHER

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Dr. Williams served as professor of Old Testament and Archaeology at Indiana Wesleyan University from 1967 to 2017, then retired after 50 years of teaching at the age of 87. He traveled 156 times to the Holy Land, leading tours and participating in archeological digs. Dr. Williams (1929–2021) lived at home with his wife, Ardelia (1924–2021), in Marion, Indiana, until their deaths.

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