

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS: A LIFE OF FREEDOM AND FLOURISHING

Week 2: Commandments 5-10 — Love Your Neighbour

[Introduction: The Two Are One](#)

Last week we established something crucial: the Ten Commandments begin with freedom, not obligation. Before God issues a single instruction, God announces who God is and what God has already done.

Exodus 20:2 (NLT)

² "I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery."

These ten words are the terms of a covenant — and they are meant for our good, to help us remain free.

Last week's first four commandments relate to our relationship with God and point back to the life humanity was designed to live before we grabbed at self-sufficiency. Every commandment is a signpost pointing toward the tree of life.

Commandments 5–10 are summarised by Jesus in Matthew 22:39 quoting Leviticus 19:18: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Loving God and loving neighbour are not two separate lives — they are one.

[Commandment 5: Honour Your Parents](#)

Exodus 20:12 (NLT)

¹² "Honour your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you."

The Hinge Commandment

This commandment is the bridge — the last of the God-focused commands and the first that reaches toward kinship and community life.

The Hebrew Word: Kabad

The word translated "honour" is kabad — literally "to give weight to," to treat something as substantial and significant. Its opposite is qalal — to make light of, to dismiss.

To honour your parents is not about agreeing with everything they say or pretending the relationship is uncomplicated. It's about refusing to make them small. To take their lives seriously.

The Original Context

When the command was given, it was primarily directed at adult children and their ageing parents. There was no pension, no aged care facility. When your parents were old, you were their safety net. The commandment is a commitment not to abandon the people who gave you life when they become inconvenient.

A Communal Promise

This is the only commandment with a specific promise: "Then you will live a long, full life in the land." It's a communal promise as much as an individual one — societies that treat older people as carrying wisdom rather than as drains on resources tend to flourish.

What It Doesn't Say

It doesn't say "obey everything your parents tell you." It doesn't say "pretend everything was fine if it wasn't." Jesus himself affirmed this commandment while also saying loyalty to God could sometimes transcend family loyalty. And Paul adds: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger." The relationship flows both ways.

For people whose parents were absent, harmful, or abusive — what does honour look like? At its core: can you honour the people and processes through which you received life, even imperfectly, even with appropriate limits, rather than simply discarding them when they become complicated?

Commandment 6: Do Not Murder

Exodus 20:13 (NLT)

¹³ "You must not murder."

Two Hebrew Words: Lo Ratsach

The Hebrew verb here is ratsach — not the generic word for killing (harag), and not the word used for the violence of war (makkah). Ratsach refers specifically to unlawful killing: the unauthorised taking of a human life. This is not a blanket pacifism; it is a prohibition on treating another person's life as yours to take.

Why It's So Serious: Imago Dei

Every person who has ever lived represents the image of God — imago Dei. To kill a person unlawfully is not just a crime against an individual; it's an act of violence against the image of the God who made them.

Jesus Pulls Back the Curtain

Matthew 5:21–22 (NLT)

²¹ "You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgement.' ²² But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgement! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell."

Jesus isn't saying anger equals killing. He's saying that murder doesn't appear out of nowhere — it begins in contempt. In the willingness to see another person as less than human, as expendable.

The question this commandment puts to us is not just "Have you killed anyone?" It's: Do you see the image of God in the people around you — the difficult ones, the different ones, the ones who have hurt you, the ones the world has decided don't count?

Commandment 7: Do Not Commit Adultery

Exodus 20:14 (NLT)

¹⁴ "You must not commit adultery."

Covenant Faithfulness as Theology

When God says *lo naaph* — "do not commit adultery" — God is protecting the living symbol of covenant faithfulness. Adultery doesn't just harm a marriage; it breaks the kinship bond of two people.

Marriage as Metaphor

All through the Old Testament, the relationship between God and Israel is described as a marriage. When Israel goes after other gods, the prophets don't just call it idolatry — they call it adultery. Hosea acts out the metaphor in his own heartbreaking marriage. Jeremiah calls Israel's spiritual wandering "adultery." The covenant between God and people and the covenant between spouses are not just analogies — they're structurally the same thing.

Jesus Deepens It

Matthew 5:27–28 (NLT)

²⁷ "You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.'

²⁸ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Lust in the biblical sense is treating another person as an object for our own gratification — using them rather than honouring them. It's the opposite of covenant love.

Covenants matter. Faithfulness is a reflection of who God is.

Commandment 8: Do Not Steal

Exodus 20:15 (NLT)

¹⁵ "You must not steal."

Everything Belongs to Someone

Commands six, seven, and eight share a structural thread — in Hebrew, each is just two words: lo' ratsach, lo' naaph, lo' tignov. They're all pointing at the same thing: what belongs to the people around us does not belong to us. Their life, their marriage, their possessions. Honour that.

Why Steal? Because We Believe God Got It Wrong

When we want something we don't have and take it, we're implying that what our neighbour has should have been ours — that God got the distribution wrong. Stealing isn't just taking someone's stuff; it's an assumption about God.

The Gift of the Land

Israel's entire narrative in Deuteronomy is built on the Promised Land as gift from God — "a land where you'll eat well and never go without." And the required response is gratitude. If we understand that all we have is a gift, we can be content with what we have.

Moving from Negative to Positive

Later in Deuteronomy 22, the command becomes positive — not just "don't take what isn't yours" but "actively look out for what belongs to others." If you see your neighbour's animal wandering off, you return it. You don't look the other way.

The deeper question: "Am I willing to honour and help others take care of what God has given them?" That's a generous way to live.

Commandment 9: Do Not Give False Testimony

Exodus 20:16 (NLT)

¹⁶ "You must not testify falsely against your neighbour."

Truth Is a Form of Love

This is courtroom language — ed sheqer in Hebrew, "false testimony." In ancient Israel there were no private investigators, no forensic scientists, no cameras. If someone's life, land, or freedom was on the line, the testimony of witnesses was everything. A false witness can destroy an innocent person and a community.

Proverbs 19:9 (NLT)

⁹ A false witness will not go unpunished, and a liar will be destroyed.

Jesus Was a Victim of False Witnesses

Mark 14:56 (NLT)

⁵⁶ Many false witnesses spoke against him, but they contradicted each other.

This commandment stands in solidarity with everyone who has ever been misrepresented, slandered, or destroyed by dishonest speech.

Beyond the Courtroom

We bear false witness whenever we pass on unverified information that harms someone's reputation — or when we tell technically true things in ways designed to create false impressions. That is what the enemy did in the garden. It is what the religious leaders did to condemn Jesus.

In the digital age, this commandment is violated over and over again. Social media has become a machine for false witness — screenshots stripped of context, misrepresentation, things said online that would never be said in person.

Augustine understood truth-telling as a fundamental form of love for the neighbour. To speak truthfully about another person is to honour their reality — to treat them as a full human being whose complexity deserves honest representation.

Practical question: Am I someone who can be trusted to speak honestly? When in conflict with someone, do I tell their story charitably — or do I tell it in whatever way makes me look most justified?

[Commandment 10: Do Not Covet](#)

Exodus 20:17 (NLT)

¹⁷ "You must not covet your neighbour's house. You must not covet your neighbour's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbour."

The Commandment That Lives in Your Head

Every other commandment addresses what we do. This one addresses what we want — our desires. Which makes it the most personally confronting.

Chamad — To Set Your Heart On

The Hebrew word chamad means to desire, to long for, to set your heart on. It's not an action — it's an internal longing. And God is saying: that matters too. Coveting is the belief that someone else's life or possessions will make us happy.

The Pattern in Scripture

So many sins in the Bible are rooted in covetousness: David looked down from his palace rooftop and desired Bathsheba — and what followed was adultery, deception, and arranged murder (2 Samuel 11). Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard — and Jezebel engineered Naboth's murder so Ahab could take it (1 Kings 21). Desire, given room to grow, eventually becomes action. The tenth commandment is trying to catch sin at its source.

Pleonexia — The Desire for More

The Greek word for covetousness in the New Testament is pleonexia — literally "the desire for more." Paul calls it idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Coveting is ultimately the worship of something other than God. It's the conviction that what my neighbour has — their house, their relationship, their career, their body, their life — would give me the security, satisfaction, and significance I'm missing.

The antidote to covetousness is gratitude for the gifts God has already given us.

The tenth commandment brings us full circle to the first. If the first commandment asks "Who or what is your God?", the tenth commandment asks "What are you trusting to fill your desires?" Both are questions about where we're looking for life — and both point in the same direction: not to what our neighbour has, but to the God who has given us more than we can account for.

[The Shape of Neighbour-Love](#)

Taken together, commandments 5–10 paint an extraordinary picture of human community:

- Every person's parents deserve honour.
- Every person's life is sacred.
- Every person's covenant commitments deserve respect.
- Every person's livelihood is protected.
- Every person's reputation should not be carelessly damaged.
- Every person's possessions should not be seen through covetous eyes.

Because every person carries the image of God.

Jesus: The Fulfilment of the Law

Matthew 5:17 (NLT)

¹⁷ "Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose."

The Greek word *pleroo* — "fulfil" — means to fill to its full measure, to complete what was always intended. Jesus is the person the commandments were always pointing toward: the one who perfectly loved God with every dimension of his being, and perfectly loved his neighbours — including the ones who killed him.

The cross is the place where the law reaches its ultimate fulfilment. Jesus carried the weight of humanity's failure to keep these commandments — not just the outward violations, but the inner ones. He bore it so that we could receive not just forgiveness but the Spirit, who begins to shape us from the inside out to become more like Christ.

Jeremiah 31:33 (NLT)

³³ "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days," says the Lord. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

The Spirit doing in the heart what the stone tablets could only describe. This is the love of God — not compliance management, but transformation.

So we keep the commandments — not to earn God's love, but because we're learning what love looks like. Not because God is watching, but because the Spirit is shaping. Not because we're afraid of the consequences, but because we're beginning to genuinely want what God wants: a community where every person flourishes, where every person's life, covenant, livelihood, reputation, and dignity matter.

Call to Action

1. Honour someone you've been taking for granted

Think of a parent, mentor, or older member of your community. Make a call, arrange a visit, offer a specific word of gratitude. Treat their life as significant.

2. Look for the image of God in the person you find difficult

Choose one person in your life who is genuinely hard to deal with. Not to excuse their behaviour — but to consciously choose to see them as someone carrying the image of God. Pray for them specifically. Notice what that does inside you.

3. Check your faithfulness

In what committed relationships — marriage, friendship, team, church — have you been less than fully present or fully honest? Not for guilt, but for growth: what would it look like to renew that commitment this week?

4. Examine one thing you consume or participate in

The eighth commandment extends to systems. Choose one economic habit — a purchase, a supply chain you benefit from, a workplace practice — and ask honestly: is this taking from someone more vulnerable than me? You may not be able to fix it overnight, but awareness is the beginning of change.

5. Practise honest speech for 48 hours

Commit for two days to speaking about other people only in ways you'd be comfortable saying to their face. Before passing on information about someone, ask: Is this true? Is it fair? Is it necessary? Notice how much it changes the quality of your conversations.

6. Take inventory of your desires

Spend some quiet time sitting with the question: What am I wanting most right now that belongs to someone else? Name it without shame. Then bring it to God and ask: what are you actually offering me instead?