

## THE PROGRESS REPORT

# The Ten Commandments

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The Ten Commandments can be interpreted broadly into a moral code that is in accord with universal morality. The Commandments are found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5:

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. God does not seek to be worshipped for His own sake, but for the sake of humanity, which means that human beings should seek to understand and apply the moral law that God has provided and which is inherent in our creation as beings that use reason. There is a supreme moral law for humanity, based on human nature and reason. Human nature is such that we are moral equals, and thus it is evil for some to be coercive masters over others. The supreme moral law is that it is evil to coercively harm others. You should not place any personal or cultural view above natural moral law, which should be supreme in governing human society.

2. Do not make any graven image to bow down to or serve. Idols, whether material images, or mental ones, are purely human creations. When we idolize such things as money or ideology or a government leader, we falsely treat it like God. The idolatry of worshipping a king or dictator leads to tyranny and warfare. A judicial system which does not let the people as jurors be the final judges of the law, turns the law and the judges into idols. The idolatry of wealth can lead to greed and theft. Idolatry can become an oppressive obsession with some particular image or idea.

3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Politicians often give lip service to freedom, justice, and peace. Then they wage war, grant privileges, and impose taxes and restrictions. Ordinary folks too say they want peace and liberty, and then they litter, steal, commit fraud, and impose their will. "Vain" here means having no real value, meaning, or effect. This commandment says, don't be a hypocrite. Mean what you say.

4. Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Observing the Sabbath prevents a master or employer from working his underlings every single day to the point of exhaustion. The Sabbath gives them a needed rest. It is spiritually healthy to pause from work periodically and consider what life is about. However, when government forces people to avoid certain activities on a particular day, this turns the Sabbath into an unholy idol.

5. Honor thy father and mother. Your parents created you, and they raised you. Treat them and all family with honor and respect. Don't lose the memory of our ancestors, because we want our descendants to remember us also. Government dishonors the family when it penalizes marriage with higher taxes, when it disinherits the children, when it takes the upbringing of children away from the parents. Government makes itself the parent. Such policy dishonors the father and mother!

6. Thou shalt not murder. Murder means killing a person other than in self-defense. Government also murders when it wages war beyond self-defense, and when it takes the life of a criminal who

is no longer a danger to society. One can also commit psychic murder when one kills the free will of a person by making him a slave or victim of crime.

7. Thou shalt not commit adultery. A marriage is or should be an agreement, a solemn contract. Adultery breaks the contract. A moral person keeps his promises. Politicians too often make promises, and then adulterate the majesty of government by cheating the public of justice as well as of their wealth, and violating their trust. This too is adultery.

8. Thou shalt not steal. Theft is taking what properly belongs to others. Fraud is also a type of stealing. Government steals when it taxes wages, because the fruits of labor rightfully belong to the worker. Taxes on income, sales, value-added, and produced goods are evil because they steal from the worker. It is also stealing when government prohibits and restricts the peaceful and honest pursuit of our personal and cultural values and beliefs. Our human equality also endows us with a common right to the fruits of the earth, as manifested in their market rents. A government that prevents folks from sharing the "profit of the earth" and instead grants it to a privileged few also violates the commandment, thou shalt not steal!

9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Your neighbor includes all those you have contact with. It is morally wrong to commit fraud, including slander and libel and defamation. It is wrong to distort another's works and history so as to create a misleading and false impression.

10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife or his house, his field, his ass, or anything that is thy neighbor's. As with the ninth commandment, one's neighbor is anyone you come in contact with. Since theft and false witnessing are already covered, why also include coveting? Because greed and envy are precursors to theft. Some won't personally steal but want the government to steal wealth just because someone else is rich. But that too covets, because if the wealth has been earned voluntarily, without infringing on our common rights, then the rich are entitled to their wealth. Politicians also covet when they force personal values on society, rather than letting peaceful individuals live according to their own culture and chosen way of life.

In Deuteronomy 11:26 God sets before humanity a blessing and a curse. If we practice the commandments, we will be blessed with peace and prosperity, otherwise we will suffer the opposite. This is not just a whim of God, but the natural order whereby sharing nature and respecting others makes for social peace and richness.