



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

The Second
Commandment

The Third
Commandment

The Fourth
Commandment

MIDWEEK SCRIPT

2016

October

Session 1—The Second Commandment

During the month of October, our services and midweek sessions will focus on a few of the Ten Commandments and their value for our lives today. The Ten Commandments were given by God to His people to provide direction on how to live according to His will. Even though they were given to the people of Israel in the Old Testament, they remain the standard for us to live by as God's people today. Jesus summarized them into "...love your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind" and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39). Although we often only focus on these commandments, we will find that observing the individual Ten Commandments helps us to fulfill the two that Jesus provided to His church. In this session we will focus on the Second Commandment: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

Our ability to keep this commandment is dependent on our understanding of God's name and our heart's disposition towards Him. First, let's better our understanding of God's name. In Exodus 3:13-14, after being told by God that he would be the one to bring God's people out of Egypt, Moses asks God what name he should give the people when they ask who sent him. God replied "I AM WHO I AM." With the name "I AM WHO I AM," God identifies Himself as the One who is complete, unchangeable, and eternal. The Israelites were about to experience something great and there was to be no confusion about who was responsible. God did not stop doing great things after the Old Testament; He has continued to do great things and we experience them in our lives. God's name is holy because He is the great Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Because of Him, all things are possible for us. He is worthy of our praise and our worship, and through our words and actions, we should strive to glorify Him and make His name known to all.

In the Second Commandment, the instruction is to not take the name of the Lord in vain. This means that we should not use His name to enrich ourselves or discriminate against others. It also means that we should not engage in speaking about Him in silly and dismissive ways; for example, using clichéd exclamations like "Oh my God!" or "Jesus Christ!" during the course of everyday life. These words are often said without any thought and become a conditioned response, but they can also reflect our heart's attitude towards our God and our Savior. For that reason, it's important that we evaluate our default choice of words.

When our hearts are centered on God and when we live humbly in the knowledge of His presence, then our heart's disposition is such that our words will reflect our love for Him. During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). How we speak is a testimony of what lives within our hearts. Is your heart centered on God? What do your words tell the people you converse with?

Think for a moment how we speak about and address those people in our lives that we love and respect, such as grandparents, parents, or mentors. Do we address them in a way that is respectful and honoring? Or, are we lax and throw whatever name at them that comes to mind at the moment? No! Because they are right here with us, we speak in a way that is respectful and demonstrates our love for them and our inner feeling about the relationship. We cannot treat our God like He is far away, unable to see and hear us. Our God is with us each and every moment, and He is worthy of our love and respect.

Think also about your prayer life. How can someone speak so lazily about God and misuse His Name, and then turn to Him in prayer to intercede for themselves or others? We pray “hallowed be your name” and “in Jesus’ name.” If we take the name of the Lord in vain as part of our regular language, how can these words hold any meaning when we turn to God in prayer?

The second part of the commandment says “...for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” This makes it clear that God’s commandments must be taken seriously. The Bible is silent as to what the punishment specifically entails. But love for God and the fear of God – not fear of any punishment – should be the primary motivation for obeying this commandment. God even arranged the Ten Commandments in a sequence that prepares our hearts to be successful in keeping them: We are to firstly worship our God above all else and keep His Name Holy.

We must keep in mind that as disciples of Jesus Christ, we have been called to be His witnesses to the world at all times. Our conversations and our actions should honor Him and show our dedication to the gospel by fulfilling our calling. By loving God above all things, including ourselves, then we will not need to worry about failing to uphold this commandment, but we will always speak His Name with honor and esteem.

Session 2 – The Third Commandment

Welcome back! In this small group session, we are going to continue exploring the Third Commandment that was talked about in a recent Sunday service: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” Most Christians observe the Sabbath on Sunday and keep it holy by resting from their work. Let’s explore what it really means to rest from our work.

When referring to keeping the Sabbath day holy, we often interpret rest as being based on the Creation narrative in Genesis 2:2, “...and [God] rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.” This is the basis for the rest mentioned in Hebrews 4:9-10, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.” Notice that the verse says when we cease from our work, we enter *God’s* rest. Keep this in mind as we talk about three different meanings of rest.

The first meaning of rest that we will look at from the Bible is the rest that the Israelites were promised as part of receiving the Promised Land (Joshua 21:43-44). Although the Israelites had been led to a land that should have been a place of rest, they did not experience it in its fullness (Hebrews 4:1-3). So the Promised Land, our first meaning of rest, did not provide what the people had thought it would.

The second meaning of rest is the weekly observation of the Sabbath when we choose to refrain from work, chores, and other activities in order to come to God’s house and have fellowship with Him and those around us. Has this Sabbath observation brought you rest? It is indeed refreshing and inspiring to come to church and worship and receive the word and sacrament, but are we finding renewal and deep, satisfying rest in it?

The Promised Land and weekly Sabbath definitions of rest point to a third and deeper meaning of rest. The word in Hebrews invites us to share in God's rest, with the instruction (v.11) to "be diligent to enter that rest." This type of rest is focused on eternal life and makes it clear that we must work with the understanding that we are dependent on God to work in and through us.

Maybe you're starting to realize something: His rest, *God's rest*, is more than just stopping our activities for a day and taking a break to worship Him. His rest is the substance of our renewal, which is wholly and fully satisfying. True—this isn't the dictionary-definition of rest we thought it was. In fact, God's rest seems like the opposite of "rest" because we are still expected to exert energy and do something. It seems ironic to say that by working, we can find rest, but it's true! However, this is only possible if we work with the understanding that God is working in and through us. Then, we receive a peace that frees us of all worries and allows us to focus on serving Him. Working with the realization that God is with us releases us from self-dependence. If we try to operate with the thinking that we have what it takes to do everything ourselves, we can find ourselves becoming restless and maybe even burning out, whether we are working in a ministry capacity or in our careers.

We can be at rest knowing that we don't have to achieve things through our own efforts, and instead focus on God's promise to work through us with His power. He gives us exactly what we need in order to do His work. Working from a position of godly rest also releases us from pride. If we realize that it is God working through us, that allows us to accomplish things in His will, and we lose the desire to boast. We can look to Psalm 127:1 as proof that our human effort is never enough: "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain."

We need our God! Without Him, we can never have complete rest. When we try to rest without God, we may relieve our outward and physical fatigue, but we will not satisfy our need for the rest that He promises us.

Relief can come only by working out of the rest that God provides. We can depend on Him to help us to do His will and also share that responsibility with those God has placed around us.

Session 3 – The Fourth Commandment

The past two sessions may have shattered the assumption that we completely understand the Ten Commandments. The Chief Apostle has made it clear that, as New Apostolic Christians, we should consider the Old Testament through the lens of the Gospel. From this perspective, as a church centered on Jesus Christ, we can continue to revisit the commandments to discover new relevance for Christian living today.

This week we will discuss the Fourth Commandment, which is a commandment of promise: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." It contains no prohibition, as is the case with the majority of the commandments. The commandments were given within the context of the journey of the Israelites to the Promised Land.

They were instructed to care for the older members of their families during this difficult journey. The promise of “long days” was a reference to earthly well-being, especially in their future homeland.

Jesus Himself was an example in fulfilling this commandment. In the second chapter of Luke, we can read of the occasion when He got separated from His parents during a visit to the temple in Jerusalem. Although He spoke firmly to His parents concerning His calling, He “was subject to them” (v. 51). Then at the end of His life when He was on the cross, Jesus made a special effort to ensure that His mother would be cared for by John (John 19:27).

In his letters, Paul provides further development of what the Fourth Commandment means for Christian living. In Ephesians 6:4 we read, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Likewise, in Titus 2:4, mothers are instructed to love their children.

Jesus fulfilled the Fourth Commandment in what we might call a “traditional sense.” In the letters of Paul, it becomes evident that the mandate of the Fourth Commandment is also applicable to all aspects of family relationships. Just as children are expected to respect their parents, parents are also expected to treat their children in a loving manner.

Let’s consider the practical, modern-day applications of the Fourth Commandment when seen through the lens of New Testament teaching. Jesus’ personal example shows us that children should respect their parents. Even though He is the Son of God, He allowed Himself to be subject to His earthly parents when He was 12 years old. But parents must also consider if they are **true, living examples** of love. When our children observe us as parents, what sort of model do we provide for them? How do we treat our spouse, others in the congregation, or our neighbors? This “treatment” is not only contained in our actions, but it must also be evident in how we speak about others. Children learn a great deal, be it good or bad, from how we care for and speak about our own parents.

Furthermore, in the direct dealings with one’s children, we need to always ask ourselves if our words, our actions, and our reactions are motivated by selfless love. Paul’s teaching in Ephesians suggests that parents need to live in a God-pleasing manner and thus **earn** the esteem that they wish their children to have for them. This implies that one must exercise a great deal of self-control. Surely, this is not always easy, but we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control (Galatians 5:23).

There is another aspect of the Fourth Commandment – that is the promise. Again we can refer to the context in which the commandments were given: during the pilgrimage to the Promised Land. The promise was quite clear in its focus on the future dwelling place of the Israelites – “that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” For New Apostolic Christians, the “land which the Lord [our] God is giving [us]” is eternal life with the Father and the Son.

It is true that the relationship between parents and children can be, as the saying goes, “complicated.” However, how can we say that we love Jesus if we do not make a concerted, sincere effort to love our neighbor, which includes our parents and children? This effort will not earn us salvation – that is strictly a gift of God’s love. But when we make the effort to love them in a Christ-like manner, we can show the Lord that we truly love Him. The application of this commandment in our family relationships also opens the door to benefits now. When everyone in the family is striving to love the others in a Christ-like manner, the basis is established for joy, peace, and harmony in family life today.