

# The Ten Commandments

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The Ten Commandments guide us in making choices that help us to live as God wants us to live. The first three commandments tell us how to love God; the other seven tell us how to love our neighbor.

1. I am the Lord your God: thou shalt not have any strange gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

According to Exodus in the Old Testament, God issued these set of laws to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments are considered *divine* law because God himself revealed them. And because they were spelled out specifically with no room for ambiguity, they're also *positive* law. Hence they're also known as *divine positive law*.

1. "I am the Lord your God, you shalt not have any strange gods before Me."

This commandment forbids *idolatry*, the worship of false gods and goddesses, and it excludes *polytheism*, the belief in many gods, insisting instead on *monotheism*, the belief in one God. This commandment forbids making golden calves, building temples to Isis, and worshipping statues of Caesar, for example.

2. "You shalt not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."

The faithful are required to honor the name of God. It makes sense that if you're to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, then you are naturally to respect the name of God with equal passion and vigor.

3. "Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day."

The Jewish celebration of Sabbath (*Shabbat*) begins at sundown on Friday evening and lasts until sundown on Saturday. Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christians go to church on Sunday, treating it as the Lord's Day instead of Saturday to honor the day Christ rose from the dead.

4. "Honor your father and your mother."

This commandment obliges the faithful to show respect for their parents, as children *and* adults. Children must obey their parents, and adults must respect and see to the care of their parents, when they become old and infirm.

5. "You shalt not kill."

The better translation from the Hebrew would be "Thou shalt not murder", a subtle distinction but an important one to the Church. Killing an innocent person is considered murder. Killing

an unjust aggressor to preserve your own life is still killing, but it isn't considered murder or immoral.

6. "You shalt not commit adultery."

The sixth and ninth commandments honor human sexuality. This commandment forbids the actual, physical act of having immoral sexual activity, specifically adultery, which is sex with someone else's spouse or a spouse cheating on their partner. This commandment also includes *fornication*, which is sex between unmarried people, prostitution, pornography, homosexual activity, masturbation, group sex, rape, incest, pedophilia, bestiality, and necrophilia.

7. "You shalt not steal."

The seventh and tenth commandments focus on respecting and honoring the possessions of others. This commandment forbids the act of taking someone else's property. The Catholic Church believes that this commandment also denounces cheating people of their money or property, depriving workers of their just wage, or not giving employers a full day's work for a full day's pay. Embezzlement, fraud, tax evasion, and vandalism are all considered extensions of violations of the Seventh Commandment.

8. "You shalt not bear false witness against your neighbor."

The Eighth Commandment condemns lying. Because God is regarded as the author of all truth, the Church believes that humans are obligated to honor the truth. The most obvious way to fulfill this commandment is not to *lie* — intentionally deceive another by speaking a falsehood.

9. "You shalt not covet your neighbor's wife."

The Ninth Commandment forbids the intentional desire and longing for immoral sexuality. To sin in the heart, Jesus says, is to lust after a woman or a man in your heart with the desire and will to have immoral sex with them. Just as human life is a gift from God and needs to be respected, defended, and protected, so, too, is human sexuality. Catholicism regards human sexuality as a divine gift, so it's considered sacred in the proper context — marriage.

10. "You shalt not covet your neighbor's goods."

The Tenth Commandment forbids the wanting to or taking someone else's property. Along with the Seventh Commandment, this commandment condemns theft and the feelings of envy, greed, and jealousy in reaction to what other people have.