

GROW UP

[based on Exodus 20:1-20]

The struggle began as they pulled out of the driveway.

The energetic daughter had unfastened her seat-belt, and was attempting to stand up.

Dad, not wanting to stop the car, pushed her back into the seat.

She stood up once again.

This continued for a few moments, until Dad, in frustration, stopped the car and placed her into her seat with some authority.

As they were pulling away, she said, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside!!"

Boundaries are important at any age.

Boundaries keep us safe, even though at times, we feel restricted.

At times *no* is a wiser and more compassionate word than *yes*.

The Ten Commandments are boundaries that, while stated in the negative, create the climate in which our relationship with God and with each other, can flourish.

The commandments are not simply God setting a standard for the People of Israel, through which they can earn God's goodness toward them.

Rather, the commandments are another expression of God's grace, leading them out of slavery, steering them away from their own needs and appetites and the deceiving temptations of seemingly urgent circumstances.

They are as much a sign of God's saving covenant as the parting of the Red Sea.

Without the commandments to guide them, their journey might wind toward some other Pharaoh, willing to enslave them.

These Ten Commandments reflect and reveal God's righteousness.

They present the **minimum** standards of righteousness that God set for his people.

Why 'minimum'?

Because Jesus taught us that the sin problem people face, is not limited to sinful actions on the outside, but can even be warped attitudes on the inside.

God's people can only please him by doing their utmost to keep his commandments.

The ten commandments also have a restraining purpose...we need some basic legal guidelines if we are to function in steady consideration of one another.

Since people have a propensity to do whatever suits them in the moment, God's commandments establish boundaries to restrain evil.

Following the commandments, gives people protection from themselves and from one another.

Laws promote order in society and prevent chaos.

I would also risk saying that the commandments provide a purpose of redemption.

Contrary to popular opinion, you can't get to heaven by obeying the Ten Commandments, because you can't keep them perfectly all the time.

In Romans 7, Paul says that the law shows us that we are sinners in the same way that a mirror shows us what's wrong with our hair.

We can't ever satisfy God's perfect standards, and that is why we need a Saviour.

Today's scripture reading tells us that after God concluded the Ten Commandments, the people were terrified.

The voice of God was frightening to them, and that's why they wanted to hear from Moses and not directly from God.

What a crazy response Moses gave!

"Don't be afraid, for God has come to test you, so that you will fear him and will not sin."

WHAT?? 'Don't be afraid' and 'fear' at the same time?

We need to understand that fearing God does not mean to be 'scared of' him.

It means being so gripped by his greatness that we hold him in the highest esteem.

To fear God, is to respect him and take him seriously.

Tony Evans, in his Commentary Bible, says that this concept is similar to how we ought to think of electricity.

"We're not to be so scared of electricity, that we are unwilling to plug anything in.

But, neither should we go around sticking screwdrivers into outlets.

Electricity is awesome and beneficial, but it must be treated with respect.

God wanted to test the people, so that they would fear him and not sin.

Similarly, God tests us, because he wants us to worship him by choice, not simply by mandate.

He wants us to say 'no' to sin, and 'yes' to him, because we have a healthy fear of him."

Let's examine the commandments in another way.

Christian disciples recognize the place of the commandments in their desire to follow Christ.

From this perspective, our obedience is a response of gratitude.

In gratitude, we accept our freedom to reject that the commandments are a ten-step recipe to earn God's love.

As boundaries, the commandments point to what is healthy and what the life-giving necessities are, in our relationship with God and with others.

Gratitude directs us to the spirit of the law and not just the words.

Someone once said, "The better the relationship, the fewer the rules."

Our prayerful and grateful encounters with the Ten Commandments can lead us to know in heart and mind what is essential.

In 1957, Cecile B. DeMille, the producer of the movie *The Ten Commandments*, was asked to give the commencement address at Brigham Young University.

He made this observation:

"Some, who do not know either the Bible or human nature, may see in the orgy of the Golden Calf only a riot of Hollywood's imaginations—but those who have eyes to see, will see in it the awful lesson of how quickly a nation or a man can fall, without God's law.

If man will not be ruled by God, he will certainly be ruled by tyrants—and there is no tyranny more imperious or more devastating than man's own selfishness, without the law.

We cannot break the Ten Commandments.

We can only break ourselves against them—or else, by keeping them, rise through them, to the fulness of freedom under God. God means us to be free.

With divine daring, He gave us the power of choice." AMEN