

Spiritual Tasks for the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20)

Adapted from tasks written by David Roth at the New Church of Boulder Valley

Introduction

Jehovah gave the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai in a dramatic fashion so that the people would know that these are not only civil and moral laws, but Divine laws. He said:

“I am the Lord your God...”

First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods before My face”

Meaning Don't make anyone or anything more important than God. Whatever we love the most is our God.

Task This week pay attention to your thoughts. See if you can detect what your mind gravitates toward the most on a daily basis. See if a pattern develops—if so, you may have just found your God. If it is a false God, pray for the strength to give it up and the wisdom and resolve to seek the true God. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.”

Second Commandment: “You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain”

Meaning This commandment asks us to think about how we use the name of the Lord and His Word in our speech and conversations. When we call on the Lord's name (which has many varieties), the Lord is present. When that happens, what are we doing, thinking, or feeling? Is it reverent and paying homage as the name of the Lord deserves? Or are we dragging His name through filth. A name is not just a name but expresses the quality of that person, or in this case, of the Lord.

Task This week refrain from using the Lord's name in a way that is not showing reverence and honor. Notice when you use it that way and make efforts to stop. Conversely, make an effort to call on the name of the Lord when you need His help. "May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble; may the name of the God of Jacob defend you; may He send you help from the sanctuary and strengthen you out of Zion." (Psalm 20)

Third Commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”

Meaning There is a story about a person being stoned to death for working on the Sabbath. This story pictures a person who labors from him or herself—that is, is led by self and selfish loves and not by the Lord. It represents that part within each one of us that cannot rest in the Lord—can't trust entirely. Our greatest challenge is to let go and trust that if we keep the Lord's laws, we will have everything we ever need.

Task This week give up control of some area of your life that you have jurisdiction and control over. Give it into someone else's keeping. See if you can't begin to feel the liberation and peace that comes from giving our life over to the Lord. Now, what control are you willing to give over to the Lord?

Spiritual Tasks for the Ten Commandments, continued

Fourth Commandment: “Honor your father and your mother”

Meaning This commandment can be a challenge in its literal meaning for people who have been hurt deeply by their parents. However, we are still to keep this commandment literally by looking for whatever is good in our parents and honoring that good. And the real meaning of this commandment is that we honor the Lord, our Father, and His church, our Mother—our true spiritual parents.

Task This week find a person that you wish to express gratitude to for their positive impact in your life. It may be that you wish to express thanks to your parents or guardians or one of the people of the “Lord’s Church” that has nurtured you in some way in your life. Write a letter, make a phone call, or send a gift of thanks. In a more expanded sense, spend this week with an attitude of gratitude for your life and all its blessings, that is, honor the Lord your heavenly Father as the source of all good.

Fifth Commandment: “You shall not murder”

Meaning Keeping this commandment is a lot more involved than we may have thought. Part of what it asks us to do is not take human life. But it also asks us to not physically wound others or another’s reputation and to shun feelings of enmity, hatred, and revenge and not use words in a hurtful way.

Task This week challenge yourself to be a life giver rather than a life taker. Naturally refrain from lifting your hand in a hurtful way to anyone, and if you are having feelings of anger or hate, stop and pray to the Lord that He remove those feelings. Simply say, “That feeling is from hell.” When you do this, you will find that the feeling subsides. We are taught that the Lord will remove these feelings if we can identify them as being from hell and ask for His help to remove them. Try to do this before you do anything hurtful.

Sixth Commandment: “You shall not commit adultery”

Meaning Keeping this commandment requires that we look deeper than just our outward actions. Yes, clearly, we are to shun the outer act of adultery, obscene desires, and lustful thoughts. But to get to the root of the problem, we have to look at spiritual adultery. Adultery means to “make different.” We commit spiritual adultery when we falsify the teachings and good things from the Word, and when we create an infernal marriage of a false idea with a negative feeling—this slowly erodes away our spiritual life and allows such things as actual physical acts of adultery to occur.

Task This week keep asking yourself, in reference to your ideas and thoughts, “Is this what the Lord teaches?” And in reference to your behavior, “Is this what the Lord would do?” See how it affects your life.

Spiritual Tasks for the Ten Commandments, continued

Seventh Commandment: “You shall not steal”

Meaning There are several levels to this commandment. First, we are to look for ways that we might be taking things that aren’t ours. This could be blatant theft, or more subtle. We are also to shun taking credit for things that are truly from the Lord, like life, strength, good, truth, happiness, success, *etc.*

Task This week give credit to the Lord for all the good in your life. Whenever anything happens that is good thank the Lord for it, right then and there. You might even take on snapping your finger and pointing upward in acknowledgment. See how it affects your life.

Eighth Commandment: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”

Meaning The Lord is truth itself. Whenever we speak the truth we are speaking of the Lord and inviting His presence. Whenever we speak lies and bear false witness, we are turning away from the Lord’s presence. There are many forms of lying: 1) Saying to yourself or another what is not true 2) Rationalizing—making excuses by lying to yourself 3) Exaggerating 4) Talking with authority about something you know little or nothing about 5) Saying things that are true with the intention to mislead 6) Lying by omission 7) Telling nice lies—lying to be kind.

Task This week practice speaking the truth. When a situation presents itself where you have a chance to speak your ideas, stop and observe. Then do three things: 1) Ask yourself, is this a lie? 2) If it is a lie, do not say it. 3) Say nothing, or work on finding a way to say what you need to say in a truthful, necessary and fair manner.

Ninth & Tenth Commandments: “You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor’s”

Meaning This commandment forces us to look at our motives and desires and not just our actions. It is a very important thing to think about because it speaks about desires-like lust, anger, contempt, and so on--that drive us to act out and break the other commandments. The two main desires it addresses are the desire to possess the property of others and the desire to rule over and control other people. These two are the source of all other negative love.

Task This week work on accepting people and situations. Begin each day with a prayer: “Lord, please give me the awareness today to be mindful of Your commandments. Give me the strength to keep them. And give me the ability to accept other people for who they are and to accept my own situation and lot in life. Thank you, Lord, for all that you have blessed me with.” Then look for reasons to be grateful.

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