



Thinking Like a Christian Autumn 2020

The Ten Commandments: Image Blueprint

Romans 12:2: Thinking Like a Christian

1. Why the Ten Commandments?

For centuries, standard basic Christian instruction – for new Christians, and for Christian children – has included three things:

The Apostles' Creed

What Christians believe

The Ten Commandments

How Christians should live

the Lord's Prayer

How Christians should relate to God

That's the basic structure for these TLC sessions too. If you come for three years, you'll get all three. Sometimes looking at them directly, and the rest of the time applying them to other issues.

2. Putting the Law in its place

Exodus 20:1-21

19:16-20 Where are we, and what is going on?

20:1 What is special about these laws?

20:2 When is all this happening? Why might that matter?

The Lord *your* God – *Covenant*

Who brought you out – *Rescue*

Of the house of slavery – *Freedom*

A quick look at Paul's letter to the Romans...

Romans 7:6

7:7

7:12

7:22-23

8:3-4

So the law is **God's design for God's images**

cannot save you

is what Jesus saves you for

3. The First Commandment: You shall have no other gods

The master commandment.

What other gods are there on offer? Brainstorm some.

v2 Why are these pretty good reasons why we should have no other gods:

I am the LORD

your God

Who brought you out of slavery

So our devotion to God needs to be

to *this* God – the God who has revealed himself in the Bible, and principally in Jesus Christ. Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Total

Undivided

Wholehearted

4. Before me

Literally 'before my face'

Is the commandment saying you can have other gods, provided they come second?

The point is that other gods are a flagrant insult to the God before whose face we live our lives.

What would you say if someone said to you:

I'm a Christian, but not a very serious one.

Christian values are really shared by people of all religions.

What matters is you believe in the God you want to believe in.

God's not really interested in my sex life.

I'll never be happy till I find the right partner for me.

Religion is really good; but it can't deal with all the problems of the world.

I know I shouldn't get drunk on Fridays, but then God always forgives me on Sundays.



Commandment 2: Who is carving whom?

The first commandment was about *who* we are to worship – only the one true God. This commandment is about *how* we are to worship him.

But before we get into it...

1. Prawns and Polycotton

What about the laws that no Christians think we need to keep any more? Like Leviticus 19:19? So why treat the Ten Commandments differently?

In the Bible, there are two different sorts of laws...

'Image of God' laws

'Just because God commanded them' laws

The second of these can change when God says that they change; the first can never change. They are laws which must be what they are because we are the images of God. These are called the *mora*/law.

Lies, sharp knives and dinner time...

2. What is being forbidden?

Commandment 1 was about not worshipping anything other than the true God.

Commandment 2 is about not trying to make an image *of* the true God.

Exodus 32:1-6	What do the people want Aaron to do? (v1)
	What do the people think the calf is? (v4)
	Which God does Aaron think this is an image of? What is he trying to do? (v5)

The point is that we are not to try to carve an image of God; that is not how we are to worship him.

3. Who is whose image?

Look at v4. 'image' and 'likeness'. These words have come together before in the Bible...

Genesis 1:26-27	Who is whose image?
Genesis 3:5	What is the temptation which Adam and Eve give in to? Why is this ironic?
Colossians 1:15	What is special about Jesus?
Colossians 3:9-10	What is Jesus doing to Christians?

So Christian worship must not be about us carving God into our images; it is about God carving us into his image.

We must worship only the one true God, and have no other gods before his face

And the worship of the one true God *must be in the way he has commanded*. We come to him on his terms, not ours.

Worship is not DIY. It is not for us to make up how God is to be served.

The difference between Christianity and paganism



Ten Commandments 3: The weight of God's Glory

1. The Two Tables of the Law

Look at Jesus' summary of the law in Mark 12:29-31.

- What are the two 'great commandments'?

Now look at the Ten Commandments.

- Are the two 'great commandments' there?
- Are you sure? What is Jesus doing?

(If you're stuck, try asking for each of the Ten, whether it is part of obeying the two; and if so, which one?)

2. Commandment 3: The weight of God's name

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.

What it means...

Exodus 3:1-6 Fire in the bush

3:11-16 What is God's name?
 Why does it matter that he is 'The God of your Fathers'?
 Who is Moses dealing with here?

'I am who I am' – a name of infinite weight

Exodus 33:17-23; 34:4-9

What does God's name imply?

Isaiah 6:1-5

Jesus and the name of God: Matthew 28:19

3. Feel the weight of God's name on your lips

How do we respond to the Law of God?

Fear

Flee

Follow

Think of some words that most people (not just Christians!) would agree we should *never* use. Why not?

What does this have to do with what we value?

Our own lips

The lips of others

What we tolerate

What about taking oaths?

4. Feel the weight of God's name on your forehead

If you are a Christian, you have been marked with the name of God!

Matthew 28:19

Revelation 22:4

When we break God's law, we profane his name – because we are called by his name.

Ezekiel 36:19-21

So every time we break God's law, as those marked with his name, we act as if his name were weightless.

Redeemed Images, designed to display God's glory

Fear-Flee-Follow.

5. Feel the weight of God's name in your whole being

1st 4 commandments: who, what, how & where of worshipping God

Are we worthy to come into the presence of God?

So how come we can?

What should be our attitude when we come to worship?

I don't think God is concerned with little sins, like bad language.

I think God is much more concerned with how we respect others than with religion and stuff.

Let's have a 'pet service' where we get all the children to bring their hamsters and guinea pigs.

I much prefer church when it's fun.

I've kept all the commandments, so I think that God should be OK with me.

God forgives on Sundays, so what happens on Fridays doesn't matter too much.



Thinking Like a Christian 25th October 2020

Fourth Commandment: Remember the Sabbath Day

1. A law that brings death, a law that brings life

2 Corinthians 3:7-11 Two eras, two 'ministries'.

Draw up a table to compare the situation under Moses, to the situation now Christ has come...

Old (Moses)	New (Christ)

Moses: You've *got* to keep this law

Jesus: You'll *get* to keep this law

2. The Sabbath: a day of rest

What is commanded:

Remember the Sabbath

To keep it *holy*

Six days of work

The seventh day is rest – for you, and for everyone who works for you.

Read Exodus 5:6-14.

What was it like being a slave in Egypt?

How would this command have sounded to you?

Back to Exodus 20. Why do you think God lists all the different people (and animals!) in v10?

v11 What is the reason given *why* we should rest?

Look up Genesis 1:31-2:3. Why did God rest? Was he tired?

3. A day to be kept Holy

Holiness describes God's own being

For anything else to be holy = set apart for God's special use

This is the day for God to take delight in his creation

And so it is the day for his images to declare his glory back to him. To meet with him, relate to him, interact with him. For **Communion** with him.

And it is a promise that one day in the future this communion will be unending.

Like A line of rivets, a family evening meal, a husband & wife's date night

For God's images, the Sabbath is the greatest possible delight, fulfilment, and rest. Rest and worship are not the same thing

4. The Lord of the Sabbath

Mark 2:23-3:6

What did the Pharisees think was the point of the Sabbath?

What did Jesus think was the point of the Sabbath?

The Sabbath law without Jesus is a ministry of death

The Sabbath law with Jesus is the promise of life

Jesus brings in a new creation

Jesus came to bring Sabbath. The great end-point to which the world was always heading, for which it was created. A day in which all things have been put right. And so an *eternal* Sabbath.

As long as we live in this world, and look to the next, we must still keep the Sabbath Day holy.

But in the New Testament, the Sabbath day has moved to the *first* day of the week.

All the resurrection appearances of Jesus

The day when the church assembled (1 Cor 16:2)

The Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10)

Old Creation	New Creation
Completed on the seventh day of the week	Completed on the first day of the week
Salvation is still to come	Salvation has been achieved
Work first, rest when you've finished	Rest first, then begin your work
We're looking forward to when God <i>will</i> bring Sabbath	We're looking back to when God <i>has brought</i> Sabbath

5. Keeping the Sabbath

A day for God, not myself

Worship is the centre of real rest

A day for God's people

A day to cease work – all work

A day for joy

A day to expect and hope and taste

Sunday is a day of rest, so I'm going to stay in bed all day.

Sunday is a day of rest, so I'm going to let mum do all the cleaning.

Sunday is a day of rest, so I'm going shopping.

Sunday is a day of rest, so I'm going to spend it paragliding/hiking/playing football

Why would I want to go to church? Sunday is my only lie in.

Why would I want to go to church? It's such an effort.

What could you change in order better to Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy?



Thinking Like a Christian 25th October 2020

Fifth Commandment: Honour your Father and Mother

1. The World the right way up

Remember the two Tables of the law:

Other	Honour
Make	Murder
Take	Commit
Remember	Steal
	Bear
	Covet

The first table is how to love God; the second, how to love our neighbour.

The definition of 'justice' / 'righteousness'

2. The commandment and the promise

Very simple: *honour* your father and your mother.

Who is 'you' in Exodus 20:12?

Look at Deuteronomy 5:16. It's the same! Except...

Look up Deuteronomy 1:2-3. Remember 'Horeb' is another name for Sinai. So who is Moses speaking to this time?

So: who is 'you' in the promise 'that your days may be long'? And what does that have to do with the commandment?

3. Family: central to the image of God

Remember Genesis 1:27-28

We are images of the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit

God alone is 'I am'. The rest of us take our being from another; ultimately from God, but immediately from our parents.

Legitimate authority

The duty to show honour

To parents

To all legitimate authorities

The first duty of those who submit to God is to submit to those God has placed over us. Our parents most of all.

4. The ruin of family

Families have been in a mess since the fall. There are no happy families in the Bible.

The destruction of family a particular, and deliberate, focus of western secularism.

Marriage, family, and submission to parents are considered *oppression*.

Every society has distorted and dysfunctional families. Ours is perhaps the first to have made the destruction of families its particular aim.

5. The faithful son and the family of God

John 1:12-14; 5:18-19; 6:37-38	What is Jesus' relationship with God?
	What relationship with God does Jesus offer us?
Acts 2:38-39	What is the place of family in Jesus' church?
Ephesians 6:1-4	How should Christian children relate to their parents?

Jesus is all about the restoration of the human *race* – by creating a new *family*, a new race. The whole of the gospel is about this

God's covenant – a promise to you and your children.

Within God's covenant people, God-given authority is a blessing!

Different spheres of authority...

6. So let's honour our Father and Mother

How important would most of your non-Christian friends think that honouring your father and mother is?

Does 'honour' mean 'obey'? Are there some circumstances when it might not? Are we more likely to submit to our parents too much, or too little?

Would you ask your parents' opinion about what you should study? What job you should do? Who you should marry? Why or why not?

Does it make a difference whether your parents are Christians or not? If so, what sort of difference?

Are there any circumstances in which we *shouldn't* obey our parents?

Should we obey the speed limit? Why, or why not?

Should we obey laws we don't agree with? When should we not?



Thinking Like a Christian 8th November 2020

Sixth and Seventh Commandments: Murder and Adultery

Reminder: Fear – Flee – Follow

Ten Words...

1. You shall not murder

What the commandment means: killing another human being, including accidental, not including war, execution and self-defence.

2. Murder and the image of God

Genesis 4:1-10	Why do you think Cain murdered Abel? (Discuss). What is God's response to Abel's murder (v10)?
Genesis 9:5-6	What is God's response to murder in general?

It is terrifying that the first sin in the Bible is taking a fruit... and the second is murder. Why does this happen?

Only God has life from himself

Being the image of God is about being a life-receiver

All sin is murder – destruction of the image of God

If we refuse to receive life from God, we will end up taking it from others.

To refuse to worship God is embrace the principle of murder.

3. Valuing God, valuing life

"Travelling abroad for the purpose of assisted dying is a reasonable excuse and so anyone doing so would not be breaking the law." – Matt Hancock, Health secretary, in the House of Commons 5th November 2020

Atheism tries to elevate humanity, but in fact destroys it.

Euthanasia / Assisted suicide

Abortion

Compare to commandment 5:

Parenthood says "I give my life for yours" – why it is so God-imaging

Murder says "I take your life for mine"

(Even suicide!)

4. Anger

Matthew 5:21-22	Why does Jesus say anger is as bad as murder?
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So what is forbidden by the commandment? Think of as many ways as you can that we try to advance our lives at the expense of others...

5. You shall not commit adultery

Includes all sexual immorality: sexual acts outside of the faithful marriage of one man and one woman.

Marriage and the image of God:

Genesis 1:27: Male and female

Genesis 2:18-25 'A helper fit for him', 'hold fast' to his wife, 'one flesh', 'naked and not ashamed'

Therefore this forbids

fornication (sex while unmarried), adultery (sex while married with someone other than your husband/wife), promiscuity, prostitution, sodomy (gay sex), polygamy and polyandry (more than one living wife or husband, either at one time or one after another), divorce and remarriage (except in very limited circumstances)...

But this is not a negative law!

It is the very opposite. It is the definition of real love

Marriage = I give my life for yours (including sexual union, which is life-giving in the most profound way)

Sexual immorality = I take your life for mine.

Pornography is a murder from the heart... Reducing the human person to an instrument for our pleasure is to wish in our hearts that they simply did not exist as persons.¹

- What do you think this author is saying? Do you agree? In what ways is adultery like murder?

A word on 'Two consenting adults' – Why two? Why adults? And it's never just two.

6. Lust

Matthew 27-30 How can Jesus say lust is as bad as adultery?
So what action should we take?

7. Jesus: His life for ours

The opposite of murder: Mark 10:45

The opposite of adultery: Ephesians 5:25-27

Just two this week. How do these statements break the commandments? Why can Christians not think like this? Think of as many reasons and angles as possible.

"I hate Donald Trump."

"What possible harm can it be for me and my girlfriend to sleep together? We love each other."

¹ 'How Pornography Makes Us Less Human and Less Humane', Matthew Lee Anderson August 26, 2019 <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/pornography-human-humane/>



Thinking Like a Christian 8th November 2020

Eighth Commandment: You shall not steal

Ah! Of course. This is commandment which Adam & Eve broke in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:1-6 Adam and his wife stole the fruit. Did they break any other of the Ten Commandments at the same time? Which ones?

Actually, Adam didn't steal the fruit. Is he innocent of breaking the eighth commandment?

1. All sin is stealing

God owns everything

Sin says to God: This thing, which you have not given to me, I take as my own.

Go through all of the Ten Commandments. How is each commandment a form of stealing?

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Other | 5. Honour |
| 2. Make | 6. Murder |
| 3. Take | 7. Commit |
| 4. Remember | 8. Steal (this one's easy) |
| | 9. Bear |
| | 10. Covet |

This commandment drives home that *all things belong to God; we live in his world, in which he owns everything.*

2. All stealing is sin

What is property? What does it mean to 'own' something?

A difficult question for atheists

But not for Christians

2 Samuel 12:1-9 David's theft

God owns everything

God entrusts things to us

So all sin steals from God; refusing to recognise that all things belong to him.

Stealing from others is refusing to accept that God has entrusted things to the right people.

The basis of ownership, property, and justice in relation to both.

What does this mean for our attitude to...

Taking bios from the office?

Slavery?

Should Christians get jobs?

Gambling?

My own possessions?

Giving money away?

Plagiarism?

3. Thieves and heirs

Romans 8:16-17 What is great about being a child of God?

Why is Jesus the heir of God?

Because he is the Son

Philippians 2:6-11 Because he did not grasp at equality with God

Ephesians 8:28 Why is the gospel good news for thieves?

What do Christians have to be willing to give up? (Romans 8:17)

What happens when we do? (Matthew 19:29)

The gospel challenges our attitude to ownership

And requires us to see our possessions entirely as entrusted to us.

I've given away 10% of my salary, so the rest is mine to do what I want with.

It's only a few sheets, no-one will mind.

We should raise taxes on the rich to help out the poor.

We should slash taxes so people can keep what they've earned for themselves.

I don't see why I should get a job next year.

**Looks at lottery tickets for sale*. It could be me!*

It's my life, I can do with it what I like.



Ninth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness

1. Love and Justice

The law of love

This is the only commandment to mention our 'neighbour' explicitly. Remember Jesus' summary: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'

Romans 13:8-9 Why is this part of the law of love?

The law of justice

But this law has in mind first of all a law-court scene – where 'witness' is given.

Are Justice and Love opposites? Why might we think so? Would we be right?

2. God's words, our words

Genesis 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26...; Isaiah 55:11; 1 Peter 3:5-7

What is the difference between God's word and our words?

So why are false words such a problem?

Genesis 3:1-5 What is the problem with the serpent's words?

Sin is an attempt to construct a false reality, and for that we use false words

Truth is grounded in God's own being, and guaranteed in God's own words.

Lies are always an attempt to justify sin or to cover it up, or both

Lies always cut people off from God's blessings

3. Truth Decay: Reality, words and truth

What defines truth? Why has it become a particular problem in our world?

4. Jesus: The Faithful Witness

John 8:26-28 What is special about Jesus' words?

John 14:6 Why did Jesus say he *is* the truth? What do you think he meant?

John 17:14-19 What is the definition of truth?

John 18:37-38a What is the answer to Pilate's question?

Jesus, the truth, who bore faithful witness even to death, redeems us from lies – our own, and others'.

5. Being people of truth

Matthew 5:34-37

Believe in the truth

Repent of our lies

Put right past lies

Be radically committed to the truth

How much do non-Christian people value truth?

Should we always tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

How would you respond...

Your boss: "Tell him I'm not in"

Have you heard what said to?

Online robot: "Click here to confirm that you are..."

It's only a small white lie; and it will avoid a whole load of problems.



Week 3

The Two tables of the law