

This is what the Heart Looks Like // Exodus 20:1–3 // Overview and Commandment 1, ‘No Other Gods but God’

AJ Jacobs, *The Year of Living Biblically*. Picked up this book the other day in Barnes and Noble... It’s not a Christian book, in fact the author is an agnostic who grew up in what he describes as an extremely secular home. He writes, *“I’m officially Jewish, but I’m Jewish in the same way that Olive Garden is an Italian restaurant.”* The premise of the book is that this very secular New Yorker, with no religious upbringing, is attempting to follow every rule of the Bible as literally as possible for an entire year. He starts out by reading the entire Bible for a month, and he writes down every single directive that he finds, big or small... so, that includes things like the Ten Commandments, but it also includes lesser known Old Testament laws for diet and ritual cleanliness.

As you can imagine, the outcome is pretty entertaining... for example,

- Leviticus says that men should leave the edges of their beards unshaven, so this guy stops shaving and ends up with a massive beard that makes him look like a member of ZZ Top.
- He stops wearing clothes made of any mixed fibers
- He plays a ten string harp
- He refuses to shake hands with women who might be ceremonially unclean; (had to be awkward—I mean, *how do you tell?* Your skirt is a little too short... I bet you’re unclean...)
- And (this was one of my favorites), he tries to fling tiny pebbles at people without them noticing in order to stone adulterers.

This whole process almost drove his poor wife crazy for a year. But this book reveals, to me, how most people feel about the Commandments... restrictive.

- How I felt as a teenager... commandments were God way of restricting any fun I could have. Like a cage. I didn’t want to walk with God because it would restrict my fun, and I didn’t want to be around people who knew God or talked about God because they would just make me feel guilty and ruin my life.

Today, I want to start a series that shows you this perspective is exactly the opposite of what the Commandments really are...

Deuteronomy means “2nd law...” Moses is reviewing the law and he says this:

Deuteronomy 6:20–24

²⁰ “When your son asks you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?’ ²¹ then you shall say to your son, ‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²³ ...to the land that he swore to give to our fathers. ²⁴ And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day.’

These commandments are given to Israel to keep them from slavery, but to keep them out of it.

So, we're going to start a series through the commandments called, "This is what the heart looks like," because these *Commandments are the best way for you to understand your own heart...* These commandments are the key to knowing purpose in your life, fulfillment... and even finding eternal life.

Now, if you've been around here, you remember that last year I did a series on the whole last half of Exodus in which I covered the 10 commandments as a whole... in 2 sermons... if you don't mind me self-aggrandizing a moment, these were 2 very important sermons, that I would suggest that you go back and listen to them... you can access them on our website, and I'll post a link to them tomorrow. They were so important that I was tempted to go back and just re-preach them for the next 2 weeks... but, instead, I'm just going to review them today in 4 points in one giga-sermon... this is not even a mega-sermon, it's a giga sermon... but we're just going to touch these things, and you should go back and dive in deeper.

1. The 10 commandments reveal how the Designer intended His design to work

- **Now, Exodus 20... turn there...** What number book of the Bible is "Exodus?" 2nd. What is 1st? Genesis. Exodus is the 2nd book in a 5-volume series.
- So, you have to read it that way.
 - In volume 1, Moses, the series author/editor, describes the creation of mankind. God creates the world and uses one word over and over again to describe it. Remember? Good. Creation was in a state of perfect peace and harmony that Jewish theologians call **shalom**; **to me, the word sounds like cool waters running over my head.**
 - But, man sins and creation falls into total disarray. Sin brings a curse and everything falls apart... we lose our relationship with God and we are driven out of Egypt; our relationships are cursed and we start to be jealous of, steal from, hate, and kill each other; our bodies are cursed and they start to age and deteriorate. The earth itself is cursed and there are thorns and thistles and tsunamis.
 - Well, God chooses to save the world through the descendants of a particular man named Abraham. His descendants are called the "children of Israel." But, strangely enough, God lets them fall into slavery for 400 years in Egypt.
 - This slavery is supposed to picture, however, mankind's slavery to sin. So, after 425 years, God sends a stuttering, mousy voiced guy named Moses to deliver Israel. LET MY PEOPLE GO? No... more like, "God says, 'You better let my people go.'"
 - But Pharaoh says, "Now... why would I do that?" Moses says, "Because my stick turns into a snake." And so he throws it on the ground. Pharaoh is like, "Big deal" and a he gets a couple of his magicians to pull that off. Little obscure detail here is that Moses' staff eating up the other 2, but Pharaoh I guess doesn't see that... or he's just dumb because he's unconvinced.
 - So, God sends on Egypt **the plagues.**
 - **Now**, Hebrew scholars have long noted that the 10 plagues are not just random displays of power. Instead, they are, among other things, a reversal of creation. In Genesis 1, creation is made good; here, creation is breaking down. Genesis 1: God brings order out of chaos; here, we have order descending into chaos. The plagues happen in a logical progression: The Nile to blood; that destroys the natural ecosystem of the Nile; out of the Nile comes the frogs; then from the frogs come the gnats, from the gnats come disease.
 - You see, **these plagues are too natural and with too logical a progression to not have a meaning.** if God's point in the plagues was only trying to show He existed and is powerful, surely he could have chosen something else! Moses could have just walked in and turned Pharaoh's soldiers tiny and then squashed a few of them... Darth Vader chokehold, and then looked at Pharaoh and been like, "Thou art next." But that's not what he did.

- These plagues are the unraveling of creation; and God is showing that when we disobey Him, the Designer of creation, life and nature unravels!
- So, here we are at these commands. These are the restoration of shalom!
- Remember our verses: **Deuteronomy 6:20–24** “When your son asks you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?’²¹ then you shall say to your son, ‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.²³ ...to the land that he swore to give to our fathers.²⁴ And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day.
- These commands tell us how our relationship to God was supposed to work; and how our relationships with others were supposed to work. And when we disobey them, life goes dysfunctional.
- So, some of you say, “But wait a minute... they don’t feel like that to me... they feel restrictive.” *They feel like death and slavery.*” We have this assumption in our culture that if something doesn’t feel right immediately, it has to be wrong. But that is crazy!
 - In the morning when the alarm goes off, everything in you tells you what *feels* right is just to stay in bed... just to stay there for another hour, another two hours... MIT: “Clocky...” But then you say, no! I will arise and go about my day. Because if you just stay in bed, it may feel right for a moment, but it ends up causing you to lose all things you love in life... you feel sluggish all day; you lose your job; etc.
 - Or how about this one: An unbelievable smell from some food fills your nostrils everything in you wants to just devour the food, but you say “No!” I will be disciplined and I will go to the salad bar and I will stuff my plate with alfalfa sprouts and garbanzo beans.
 - Every episode of *The Biggest Loser* is the same...
 - You do that... Some of you even pay someone to yell at you and make you do that... Do you ever think about how crazy that is? I am PAYING someone to yell at me... *because I know that unless they do, I will obey the impulses of my body which will not grant me freedom, but take it away!* We willingly subject our desires to what we know is good for the body.
 - Does it make any sense to do that for the body but not the soul?
 - G.K. Chesterton... group of kids... like a brick wall...

2. **These commandments reveal God to us**

- The whole point of the Exodus... that people might know God. The movies always get it wrong... So, they come out... chapter 19. It’s a scary scene (describe). Then, out of that moment... these commandments come.
- What is happening? God is introducing Himself. These commandments reflect His character, His face, His holiness.
 - People are scared of the word holiness and righteousness... opposite of holiness is decay; opposite of righteousness is wrongousness.
- These commandments are a response to the beauty of God. *You know, in a sense: all of the Christian life is a response to God.* Think about it...
 - Worship
 - Repentance: majesty of God
 - Belief: response to the promises of God.
 - Even evangelism and ministry are a response to what God has declared He wants to do. such an important principle. All of the Christian life is a response to God.
- Well, this is especially true of these commandments. Obedience to these commandments is a way of communing with, knowing, and worshipping Him. If you love God, and desire to know Him and be with Him and be like Him, these are what you do.

- All the Bible writers talk about the commandments this way.
 - The Apostle Peter says, “...As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.” (1 Peter 1:15). See? Response to God.
 - The Apostle John says: “When He appears... we will see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope purifies Himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:3)
 - If this is your greatest hope... seeing and knowing God and being with Him forever... then you want the makeup of your heart to be like the makeup of His... and so you pursue purity of heart and mind.
 - What you pursue shows what you prize. If you are most pursuing career success and 6-digit income and early retirement and material achievement, then what you prize is money. If what you most prize is God, however, then it shows up in how much you pursue *purity and holiness and God-likeness*.
 - Or, one more. I’ve given you Peter and John... here’s Paul: “As beloved children, become imitators of God.” (Eph 5:1)
 - Your children delight to be like and imitate you... because they love you. They just want to be like you. I remember as a child trying to dress like my dad, root for the same sports teams my dad did, and use the same phrases that he used. This wasn’t out of duty because I thought I’d get in trouble if I didn’t, but rather from a desire to imitate his behavior because I wanted to be like him! I admired and loved him.
 - The commandments reveal God to us, and if we love Him, we’ll do these commandments because these are what He is like!
 - Listen... this could be life-changing. *God is not just after obedience... he’s after a new kind of obedience!* He doesn’t want a nation of slaves, He wants a nation of people whose obedience flows out of the pit of their stomachs.
 - If you “obey” only because you feel guilty, or fear God’s wrath... if you’d rather sin, but you don’t because you’re afraid of being caught or embarrassed or losing your family or being punished... something *bigger* is wrong. Your aberrant desires reveal that your heart is severely out of alignment. You have what Dorothy Sayers called a “deep interior dislocation of the soul.”
 - You don’t have to tell me, “Don’t abuse your kids. Don’t try to give them away. Don’t encourage them to play in traffic. Feed them. Help them make good choices.” If there were a law manual that said I must do these things, I’d say, “Of course I’ll do these things. I love them!” In fact, sometimes those laws help me see the best ways to love them.
 - **God is not after obedience... he’s after a new kind of obedience!** Obedience like that of King David, who said: “*I delight to do your will, O God. Your word to me is like honey on my lips and water to my thirsty soul.*”¹ David didn’t say, “I tolerate your will. Or, I’ll put up with it so I don’t have to go to hell.” He said, “I delight in it.”
- So, let me restate this 2nd point: **These commandments reveal God to us (and we obey them because we love God want to be like Him).**
 - *One more thing before we go to point 3: The fact that commandments reveal God is the key to understanding their ongoing role in your life.* A common question people start to have when they begin to read the Bible. Christ has freed us from the law... don’t have to be circumcised... “Do all these laws no longer apply? I figure the murder one still does... and probably the adultery... and we should keep the bestiality commandment on the books... but, how do you know which ones we should still obey?”
 - Great question: The laws basically fell in 3 categories:

¹ Psalm 40:8; Psalm 119

- **Ceremonial laws that prefigured Christ:** Ceremonies and rituals that pointed toward Christ. Christ has come; He has fulfilled these, and so we are no longer required to do them. When you've got the real thing, you don't need a plastic replica. **My wife' engagement.** In some cases, God gave us new ceremonies to replace the old ones... like, communion.
- **Civil laws:** laws which ordered the civil life of Israel... these are good to study because you can learn about God's sense of justice... but they no longer apply, because we are not living in a theocratic Israeli state.
- Then there is what I will call **Moral laws that reveal God's character:** These are commandments that give us a window into the heart of God; show us His face. Now, we are no longer under the law, but God hasn't changed, and human beings haven't changed... so the things that were offensive to Him and harmful to us are still offensive to Him and harmful to us. So, these laws are still applicable because the God they revealed is still the same and not changed.
 - For example, God still loves purity. He still loves honesty. He still knows the best ways for us to relate sexually to each other.
 - Even some of the more obscure laws are still helpful. For example, people say 'tithing is law.' Yes, but God's plan for our stewardship of what He has given us hasn't changed... so, we still do it.
 - You say, some of these laws offend me. What is fascinating is observing how the Bible offends different cultures in different ways. As an American, we get offended by what God says about sexual purity. I lived for a while in a culture where they weren't offended by that at all... but the laws about turning the other cheek, forgiving your enemies... that offended them.
- So, bottom line... yes, we are no longer under the law. But God hasn't changed, and now that we have met Jesus, God in the flesh, our obedience and conformity to these things should be less, not more.
- In fact, I'd say it like this: **Our status under the law has changed; the God they reveal has not.**

#3 is an extremely important one... getting this right makes the difference between heaven and hell... and a lot of religious people... sadly, the majority of them, get this wrong.

3. **The commandments reveal the state of our hearts; they cannot provide salvation**

- When we look honestly at these commandments, 1 of the 1st things we see is that our hearts desire a lot of things that go against these commandments. If these things reveal the beauty and character of God and His will, then we look at these commandments and say, "Wait... what's wrong with my heart... I want the opposites of these... what does that say about me?"
- If these commandments are beauty; I desire depravity; if these are righteousness, my heart is characterized by wrongousness; if these are godliness, what I desire is godlessness! I'm a practical atheist. I might believe in God with my head, but I live like He is dead.

1. Have no other gods before Me: Can you say, "I have never put anything before God in my life. I have never loved or trusted or obeyed anything more than God. God and God alone has always been pre-eminent in my thoughts, affections, and actions. I did not get upset this morning when I arrived late and the coffee bar was closed because I was more excited about worshipping God than drinking coffee."

3. Don't take My name in vain: I have always held the name of God, which signifies His character, in highest respect, invoking His name only with thoughtfulness and reverence. I have never used His name as a swear word. I have never been lethargic or apathetic during worship. I have never desecrated God's name by calling myself His follower but not representing Him well. The way I talk, act, spend money, and drive give honor to the God whose name I attach to my life and whose bumper sticker I display on my car.

4. Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy: I always, whether with my time or my money... I always set aside part of it just to worship and honor God. At least 10% of my income; at least 1 day a week.

5. Honor your parents: I have always been submissive to my parents and other authorities. I've always given them honor and willing obedience, whether they were not watching anyone—my parents, my teachers, traffic cops, the IRS, and my president.

6. Don't kill: "Oh, good, I haven't done this one." Not so fast, how many of you would say, "I've never had a murderous *thought* about someone... I've never had hateful thoughts or have taken the slightest pleasure in seeing harm done to another human being—not my boss; not my in-laws; not even my enemies.

You say, J.D., not fair... you are taking these to the heart... doesn't count if you don't do them. Says who... whether you do them or not, they show the state of your heart. And God doesn't want you to be in heaven, in His presence, if you desire hell. If your heart hates God and His rule, God doesn't want that in heaven!

7. Don't commit adultery: How many of you can say... I have never had sex with someone not my spouse; furthermore, I've never fantasized about sex with someone I'm not married with.

8. Don't steal: Would you say, "I have never taken anything that doesn't belong to me. I've never taken credit that didn't belong to me, cheating in school or on my taxes, or downloaded illegal music. I never waste my company's time internet surfing, twittering or facebooking. I am always willing to take only what I've earned. *How's this working out for you?*

9. Don't lie: Do we even need to go over this one?

10. Don't covet: "Yeah, I've always been *completely* satisfied with my station in life. I have never been greedy for the abilities, the looks, the position or the possessions of others. When someone gets a blessing I don't have, I'm not jealous, I rejoice with them! And I've never, not once, complained about what God has provided for me. I've always just trusted Him and been satisfied with what He gave to me.

This is what the law reveals about your heart. You say, "Well, *I'm a "pretty good person."* Were you paying attention? Pretty good compared to whom? If you were even halfway honest, you've got to say, "*Yeah, I'm a pretty good person except for the fact that I'm a blaspheming, lying, murderous, disrespectful, greedy, adulterating idol worshipper.*"

And here's the reality: ***This law is the face of God.*** And God is so holy that He can't even look at impurity and let it live. When this law was given...

- ¹⁸ Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹ and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.”
 - God had given instructions that a perimeter was set up around this mountain where God was and if someone so much as stepped foot on the other side of the perimeter they were to be killed. Imagine that scene... you are standing before that mountain, which is consumed in flame; there were earthquakes and a trumpet blast... your kids are scared and you want to comfort them but you are scared and you’re trying to hold them close because if they wander across that line they are to be killed.
- When Isaiah saw God, He saw the angels covering their face in His presence, he, the prophet of God, falls down on His face in fear and says, “Woe is me, I am completely ruined...”
 - God is so holy that if a human being with sin is in His presence... he would be immediately incinerated. God told Israel that nobody could look directly at His face and even live. Habakkuk 1:13, “God is of such purity that he cannot even look at evil.” You would be like a piece of paper touching the surface of the sun...
 - Do you realize what that means? If God suddenly ripped the roof off of your house you looked up into His face, you would immediately die
- But I’m good... No you’re not. I showed you that you aren’t. *“The slightest sin has an infinite hatefulness in it so that even the smallest sin outweighs the greatest loveliness in the creature.”* - Jonathan Edwards
 - We are poisoned by sin... sin is present in almost every thought we have. Sin saturates the core of our being.
 - And I know that this is not popular... but the only rightful punishment for it is hell. Hell is what hell is because sin is what it is.

All the law does is show you that. It is like a measurement... when I was in 9th grade I wanted to get taller so I could play basketball... I would run over and see... That’s what the law does... it can’t change you.

So what do you do?

- *“The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:24)*
- Elsewhere Paul says it like this: *“But now, the righteousness of God apart from the law has been revealed... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe... who are justified by his grace as a gift... Jesus, whom God put forth as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith.”* Romans 3:21–24
 - Righteousness given to us as a gift, through Christ’s propitiation, to be received through faith in Jesus!
 - Jesus suffered the full fury of God’s wrath in our place. All the fury of God’s holiness and wrath was poured into Jesus... I’ve heard it described before like standing in front a dam 10K feet high (2miles!) and a mile wide and having it break open all at once and right before the torrent of waters get to you the ground opens up and swallows the water so that not a drop touches you. Jesus took the cup of God’s wrath, drank it to the dregs, turned it over and said, “It is finished!”
 - It is a gift, and it is received by faith. Just receiving it.
 - Guy executed...
 - When you receive that gift, it releases a power in you that the law couldn’t give to you.
 - The law is like a set of railroad tracks. The tracks provide no power for the train but the train must stay on the tracks in order to function. The law never gives any power

to do what it commands. Only the gospel has power, as it were, to move the train, to change the heart.

- **“For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law, but... the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith... (Gal 3:21, 24)**
 - *Rescuing Ambition*
- That leads to one of the most important observations about these commandments. These commandments are given in the context of salvation, **Exodus 20:1**, “And God spoke all these words, saying, ² “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery...” In other words, I’ve already saved you. I’ve already forgiven your sins and purchased your freedom and made you mine. He didn’t approach them while they were in slavery and say, “OK, here’s my 10 commandments. Keep at least 6 of them 80% of the time and I’ll let you out...” He said, “I have already released you from slavery... now obey these.”
- There are 2 reasons people obey the commandments: to be accepted; because they have been accepted.
- Every religion in the world, except for the Gospel, teaches you that if you obey enough you will be accepted. The Bible reverses that... it teaches a fundamentally different kind of obedience than every other religion. It says, “Obey not in order to be accepted, but because you have been accepted.” **In other religions, acceptance is rewarded for obedience; in Christianity, obedience is a response to acceptance!**
- God doesn’t love you more because you are obedient; the fact that He loves and accepts you is what makes you obedient.
- God is not just after obedience; He’s after a new kind of obedience. An obedience that comes from love and delight in God, not from the threats of the law.
 - As every parent and teacher knows, coercing a child’s behavior through fear of punishment is shallow and short-lived. It only lasts until the kid is not in your presence.
 - Shallow and short-lived is not what God wants; He wants you to obey from the heart and delight in God’s laws.
 - **How does He create delight-filled obedience? Through “faith in what Jesus has already done,” not fear of what will happen if “we don’t.”**
 - **The “new” obedience God is after can never be created by the threats of the law, only by the wonders of grace.**

So, let me review:

1. The 10 commandments reveal how the Designer intended His design to work
2. These commandments reveal God to us
3. The commandments reveal the state of our hearts, not provide salvation

What does all this mean for you?

- **You need God:**

- Your life is falling apart because you think life will work better with you in charge. You are a little Pharaoh... and maybe God is sending plagues your way... maybe not boils all over your body... but it could be deteriorating health; a bad marriage; personal dissatisfaction. You may be mad at God for all of that... but what if that is God’s *mercy* to you, to help you see that you need God in your life?
- Some of you are like a planet who thinks things would be better if you were at the center... as far as you were concerned the whole UNIVERSE rotated around you. You wanted to call the shots. You have lived life for you, according to your desires... **Arguably the most important**

astronomical discovery ever... perhaps most important scientific discovery, was that of Copernicus...

- **You need a Savior:**

- You are condemned... you need to give up hope that you're just fine without Jesus... No, you are guilty, with no chance of making it in heaven.
- UNC: "Jesus is just a crutch for you." Yes, but I'd take it 1 step farther. If you want to use medical terms, I'd say Jesus is not a crutch, but a stretcher... because you can't even limp into heaven without Jesus.
- You have no hope without Jesus. Life won't work, and you'll be lost forever in eternity.
- Jesus alone can give fulfillment in life and peace in death; you need to come to Jesus today.

Bullpen:

4. The heart of these commandments is worshipping God and God alone

- The 1st commandment is the key to all the rest...
- “No other gods before me.”
 - Speaks to what we love, trust in, obey. We were supposed to love nothing more than God; trust in nothing more than God; obey nothing more than God.
 - The reason we break the commandments is because we don’t obey this one.
 - You steal because there’s something you need for the future more than God... usually money. You love and trust in it more than you love and trust in God... so, you steal to get it.
 - You commit adultery because... because you need relationship or you need pleasure more than you need God. You love and trust in it more than you love and trust in God, so you’re willing to turn your back on God to get it.
 - You break the Sabbath because you need to work to get ahead... why, because that’s how you get ahead, and how you make money. And, you love and trust in money more than you love and trust in God.
 - See how that works?
- In fact, I’d say most people can’t obey the commandments, no matter how much they are commanded, because something else is their God.
 - RYR...
 - I can’t see into your heart... but Jesus’ commandment is the same. The only way you can follow Jesus is for Him to be what you love, depend on, trust in... more than anything else.
 - Matthew 6:33, “Seek 1st”; In this passage Jesus explained why most people can’t do that... he said most people serve money rather than Him. They look to money to be their security, rather than Him, and many look at having lots of money as the key to personal significance. So, Jesus used two analogies that deal with 2 personality types.
 - He told some people they need to be like the birds... He said, “The birds don’t lay up money, but God makes them secure.” In other words, make God your security, not money... because He can take care of you better than money can.
 - He told other people to be like the flowers... He said, “The flowers don’t spend lots of money on clothes, but God makes them beautiful.” In other words, make God your beauty, not money... because God can give your life a beauty and a significance that money never can.
- **When you love and delight in God more than anything else** (when you feel like knowing Him is your greatest possession and pleasing Him gives you more delight than anything else); **and when you trust Him more than anything else** (when being in His will is all you need to feel secure about the future), then you will be able to keep all the other commandments!
- It is strange to me: When you ask someone about the commandments, why do they only talk about the moral ones, and never these 1st 2?
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- Many of you have tried to get God in your life without getting in place these 2... Copernican revolution
- **Context:** frightening holiness: ¹⁸ Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹ and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.”

Jesus said, “If you love me, you’ll keep my commands.” When John (or Jesus) talks about keeping God’s commands as a way to know whether you love Jesus or not, he’s *not* using the law as a way to motivate. He’s simply stating a fact. Those who love God will keep on keeping his commands. The question is *how* do we keep God’s commands? What sustains a long obedience in the same direction? Where does the power come from to do what God commands?

- Thus, those of us who know Him and love Him and think His face is beautiful should be like this, too. We want to be pure because He is pure. We want to be fair and just because He is fair and just. We do these things and live this way *in response* to Him.
- **A couple of quick examples:**
 - **Commandment 1: No other gods but God**
 - This is probably the most important commandment for life coming together and life working. We were created for God... Human beings are created as worshippers, and the only worship that satisfies us is the worship of God. You say, “Not me, I’m not a worshipper! Yes you are. All of us look to something from which we derive ultimate meaning, ultimate security. Something about which you say, “Without that, life is not worth living.” Money, fame, family, love... You say, “Not me... I don’t need any of that, I just need me.” I suppose you need health and independence... Everyone worships something... something they need for life to work. You can no more turn off your drive for worship by not being religious than you could turn off your drive for success by being single. It just doesn’t work that way.
 - Anything we substitute for God will ultimately cause us to rot and deteriorate. We have a God-shaped vacuum. We were designed so that life only works when God is at the center.
 - Many of you have thought the path to happiness was exactly the opposite of that: life would be good when you were at the center; when you made the rules; when you were the point... when you were in charge.
 - But it doesn’t work. You say, “But I really want it to work because... who wouldn’t want to be at the center?” Think of it like this... up until the time of Copernicus... Copernican Revolution.
 - Many of you need to have a Copernican revolution. The reason your life is slowly unraveling is that you don’t have God at the place He’s supposed to be, and your life is falling apart.
 - You are dis-integrating.
 - **Another example: Commandment 7: Do not commit adultery**
 - Many people (including many Christians) think this is an arbitrary rule. At worst, it’s God wanting to ruin our fun; at best, maybe it’s a test, like, “*Don’t eat the marshmallow*” just to see if we can handle it... but, in reality, sex outside of marriage is not really harmful...

- But that's actually not true. Based on what I know, what I've seen, and what I've experienced, I could pretty confidently say now that even if there was no God, I'd still say sex outside of marriage is a very bad idea—which is why basically every religion in the world teaches you not to do it. (BTW: **some of you say, "We should find the best in every religion..."** Every religion consistently teaches you this... this is the collective wisdom of mankind, so why not start here...)
- Why do I say sex outside of marriage is destructive? Because sex is supposed to be a oneness of your bodies that is accompanied by oneness in every other area. **Don't mean to be graphic, but you are very vulnerable, your bodies interlock... ONE PERSON physically. That is to be matched by oneness in every other area:** emotional, spiritual, financial... you become a complete part of that other person for life.
- **When you have sex outside of marriage, you are taking physical oneness from them without giving them the rest of yourself.** It's tearing their soul apart. Like a Horcrux in Harry Potter... and yes, as far as I know, I am the 1st one to make that comparison.
- That kind of sex, while it may be temporarily enjoyable, is both selfish and destructive. Your body is telling the person you're having sex with one thing... "I'm yours completely, forever," but that's not true... because you are not really joining the rest of you to them.
- So, in the right context it is a wonderful, love blessing, but out of that context, it is selfish and destructive. Thus, the commandment: "Don't have sex outside of marriage, because it destroys the person you're having sex with rather than building them up.