



Weekly Booster

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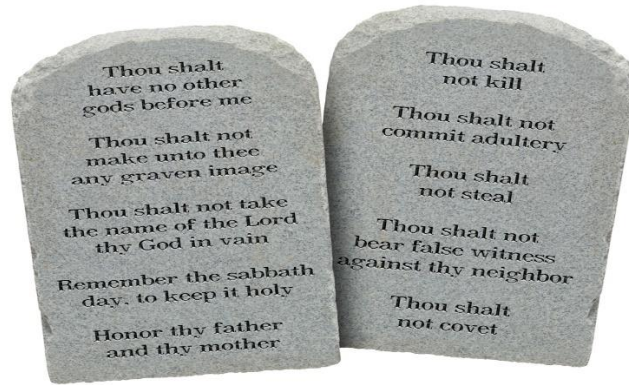
Craig Harris,

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Barb Cunningham,
Craig Harris, Jeff Hiser

Sunday Praise Team

Terry Stafford, Linda Haldane,
Margaret Brady, Deb Finlay,
Jeff Hiser, Jodi Anderzhon



The Ten Commandments: Guidelines for a Maximally Fulfilling Life

Is There a Historical Precedent for the Ten Commandments?

Long ago (around 3500 years ago) and far away (in what is modern-day Turkey) the Hittites ruled an empire that extended from Asia Minor to Upper Mesopotamia. Interesting, sort of, you could be thinking, but what does this have to do with the Ten Commandments? More than you might expect. Bear with me while I explain.

As the Hittite Empire grew, it encountered territory ruled by lesser kings. As an alternative to armed conflict, the Hittite kings offered the lesser kings the option of acquiescing to a formal treaty arrangement. These treaties between the Hittite king (the suzerain) and the subordinate king (the vassal) had a fixed form, the heart of which included: stipulations, blessings for carrying out the stipulations, and curses for violating them.

How Are the Ten Commandments Like and Unlike These Treaties?

Scholars have long recognized that the book of Deuteronomy seems to intentionally parallel these Hittite suzerain-vassal treaties. Further details regarding how this is so can be found in chapter 8 ("Enduring Witnesses") of my new book, *30 Old Testament Passages with Deeper Meaning* (Zondervan, 2023).

Continued page 2.

Question and Answer –

Q: Which Bible character had no parents?

A: Joshua, son of Nun

Reminders

July 8th

Men's Bible Study – 8:00 a.m.

July 12th

Praise Team - 5:00 p.m.

July 13th

T.O.P.S. – 5:30 p.m.

July 16th

Methodist Men's Breakfast
8:00 a.m. Fellowship Hall
All Men Are Welcome

****Worship Assistants are needed
for July 30th & August**

**** Fellowship Volunteers needed
sign-up in Fellowship Hall**



Two Volunteers Needed each Thursday

to Deliver Meals

Sign-Up Sheet for July on the

Welcome Center Counter

Commandments - Continued from page 1.

What is important for us to note here in our reflection on the Ten Commandments is that the biblical iteration of them found in Deuteronomy corresponds to the “stipulations” section of a Hittite suzerain-vassal treaty. The Israelites who heard these divinely delivered commands, therefore, would recognize them as God’s stipulations for the behavior that was required of them to remain in a healthy relationship with him. That is, the stipulations/commandments describe how the Israelites could enjoy the blessings that resulted from appropriate behavior within the treaty (or covenant) arrangement and avoid the curses that would result from a failure to do so.

Who Benefits When the Ten Commandments Are Obeyed?

But where the biblical covenant stipulations part ways with the Hittite treaty stipulations is in their purpose. In the Hittite treaty, the suzerain required behavior from his vassals that would promote his interests. The vassals had no negotiation chips to play; they either complied or they would be crushed. In the words of the Borg (for Star Trek fans): resistance was futile. Of course, no one with whom God enters into a covenant relationship has any negotiation chips to play either. But our suzerain is not like the Hittite suzerain. Because where the Hittite suzerain mandated stipulations that ultimately benefited *him*, God mandates stipulations that ultimately benefit *us*.

The Bible itself tells us this is true (more on this later), but we often see God more as a Hittite suzerain who will crush us if we don’t do what he commands instead of as a gracious God who seeks our good. I suspect that’s because we’ve all regularly experienced human commands that have been motivated by a desire for self-advancement: “Get out of my way!” “Don’t interrupt me!” “Just do what I say!” “Wait until I’m done!”

While we can conceive of circumstances where commands like these might be acceptable, we have to admit that those circumstances are usually not present when we hear them. So we may, perhaps even unconsciously, begin to associate *all* commands with the unwelcome imposition of someone else’s will at our expense. Commands of any sort, we might conclude, restrict our freedom and experience of the fullest possible life we could otherwise have.

Continued page 5.

Question and Answer

Q: Why didn't Noah go fishing?

A: Because he only had two worms.

Volunteers Needed



**LAST PERSON LEAVING
PLEASE TURN OUT LIGHTS
AND LOCK DOORS**

First United Methodist Church
**Please wear your
name tag on
Sunday mornings**



Church Office Hours

**** Children & Jr.-Sr. High
Sunday School finished
until September 2023**

****NO Chancel Choir Until
Fall – Wednesdays, 6:45
p.m. Sunday 8:30 a.m.**

The front door to the church
will be unlocked during
office hours and closed only
for errands and lunch.

- Monday**
9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00
- Tuesday**
9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00
- Wednesday**
CLOSED
- Thursday**
9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00
- Friday**
9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00

Please continue to call in
advance if you need in the
church to make sure
someone is in the office. If
you reach the answering
machine please leave
your name, number, and
a brief message and your
call will be returned. Calls
after 2:00 p.m. may be
returned the next
business day.



Which prophet did the Lord
send to Nineveh?

- a) Amos
- b) Jonah
- c) Habakkuk
- d) Elisha

Who drove furiously?

- a) Abner
- b) Jehu
- c) Nabal
- d) Balaam

What will be offered to
the name of the Lord in
every place according to
Malachi?

- a) Myrrh
- b) Incense
- c) Gold
- d) Silver

**Check page 4 for answers
from the previous week.**

Birthdays and Anniversaries



- 9th – Dennis & Cheri Christiansen
- 10th – Grayson Howard
- 11th – Becky Livengood
- 12th – Logan Ehlers, Dennis McLaren

****See a wrong birthday or anniversary, or need one
added, please call the office, or send an email to
office@shen.church**

**Shenandoah First United
Methodist Church**

200 Church St.
Shenandoah, IA 51601

Phone 712-246-2081

Church E-mail
office@shen.church

Same address – a new look at
<https://shen.church>



<https://shenchurch.onechurchsoftware.com/>



United Methodist Church,
Shenandoah, IA

<https://www.facebook.com/methodist.church.shenandoah>



Services are now on our Youtube
channel only.

<https://www.youtube.com/@shen.church8192/streams>

***Prelude/Postlude/Accompanist: Terry Stafford**

Call to Worship

Leader: Jesus says to us: "Come and I will give you rest."

People: We are weary and burdened.

L: Jesus says to us: "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart."

P: Our weary souls will find rest in you.

L: Jesus says to us: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

P: Help us to learn new rhythms of grace.

"Rest for Your Souls"

Gospel Reading: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Songs

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling #384

Still #3134

Be Still My Soul (screens)

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing #400

Our Mission:

"Know & Serve God by Sharing Christ's Love."

Our Vision:

"We will grow in holiness, our community will thrive, & we will make a difference in our world."

Answers for July 2nd are b) David d) All of the above a) Ezekiel.

Quiz s hints – Q1) Jonah Q2) 2Kings Q3) Malachi

That was certainly true for the stipulations Hittite vassals had to accept and it seems true as well, we might think, for the biblical commands that God's people are to accept.

Commands Save and Protect Life

But commands, even human ones, are not necessarily bad. In fact, instead of restricting our lives, they may in fact save our lives. I went around my home and searched the labels on common household products for all the positive and negative commands that are intended to prevent a catastrophe:

- Do not consume! (on a bleach bottle)
- Do not spray on heated surfaces, heated pots or pans, or near open flame! (on non-stick spray)
- Promptly see a doctor if swallowed! (on a pack of AA batteries)
- Keep away from heat, spark, electrical, fire, or flame! (on a container of rubbing alcohol)
- Do not use in a microwave oven! (on a box of aluminum foil)
- Use only in a well-ventilated area! (on a bottle of spray cleaner)
- Do not put it in the water! (on a hand mixer)
- Keep out of reach of children! (on a box of pain reliever tablets)
- Do not use it by mouth! (on a jar of medicated ointment)
- Wear safety glasses when operating! (on a power tool)

The 10 Commandments in the Bible

Take these warnings into account as you think about the Ten Commandments as they are outlined in Exodus 20. As you read, ask yourself—are these commands designed to restrict my freedom or protect it?

¹And God spoke all these words:

²“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

³“You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it, you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹²“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³“You shall not murder.

¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ “You shall not steal.

¹⁶ “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

The Ten Commandments Lead Us to the Fullest Possible Life

All of the ten commandments in the first list above are intended to save or protect life. We would agree that only a foolish person would ignore them. The same is true of the Ten Commandments (found in Exodus 20:1–17, above, and Deuteronomy 5:6–21). These biblical commands are also given to save or protect life; but even beyond that, they are given to us so that we can know how to experience the fullest possible lives.

Consider the motivation for obeying biblical commands outlined in the following verses:

Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, ***so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time.***

(Deuteronomy 4:40, emphasis added)

The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God ***so that we might always prosper and be kept alive***, as is the case today. (Deuteronomy 6:24, emphasis added)

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today ***for your own good?*** (Deuteronomy 10:12–13, emphasis added)

Whoever scorns instruction will pay for it,

but whoever respects a command ***will be rewarded.*** (Proverbs 13:13, emphasis added)

Notice that nowhere in the Bible is it said that our obedience benefits God somehow. After all, how could it? Rather, our obedience to God’s commands benefits ***us!*** The One who made us knows how his creations can function at their peak performance and enjoy the fullest possible lives. And he has told us what that looks like by means of the Ten Commandments. Only a foolish person would ignore them.

Jesus Obeys on Our Behalf and Suffers on Our Behalf

Biblical commandments differ from the stipulations of a Hittite treaty document in a couple of other, significant ways. First, realizing that we would not be able to perpetuate the relationship with our king by faithfully carrying out these stipulations, God became a perfect human being so that he could do this on behalf of all those who claim that perfect human as their representative. In other words, the blessings God

promises for carrying out his relational stipulations are realized by all those who put their faith in Jesus (Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 1:3).

The second way biblical commandments differ from the stipulations of a Hittite treaty document is in the way violators are dealt with. For those who violated the stipulations of the treaty, the Hittite king invoked his gods to destroy them and their entire families, their town, their land, and everything they owned (see, for example, the “Treaty between Šuppiluliuma and Aziru” (COS 2.17a: 95). But, again, realizing that we would invariably fail to keep the relational stipulations/commandments, God became flesh to bear the curse for that failure himself. As the apostle Paul succinctly puts it: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). There is now no condemnation for those who put their faith in Jesus (Romans 8:1).

How Are the Ten Commandments Still Relevant Today?

So do we need to keep the commandments today if Jesus has already paid the price for our failure to keep them? To answer this question, we have to remember why these stipulations were given to us in the first place.

First, God has given us these commandments to guide us into a maximally fulfilling life—life in the closest possible relationship with the Lord, the giver of life (commandments 1–4), and in mutual, life-affirming relationship with one another (commandments 5–10). Jesus summarizes these commandments as loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30–31). We only need to do these things if we desire to know life in all its fullness.

Second, God even sends his Holy Spirit to indwell us (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13) and enable us to realize this fulness of life to an increasing degree as he transforms us into the likeness of the one who did it perfectly (Romans 8:9–14; 2 Corinthians 3:18); that is, the likeness of the perfect relationship partner: Jesus himself.

The Ten Commandments and the Gospel are Both Good News!

Contrary to those who place the law and the gospel in tension, we recognize that the Ten Commandments, too, are gospel, or good news! Consider the following:

- 1 – The fact that we have these divinely delivered guidelines on how to enjoy the fullest possible life is *good news*.
- 2 – Moreover, the Ten Commandments lead us to discover the *good news* that all the blessings of an unbroken relationship with God have been secured for us forever through the relational obedience of the Son.
- 3 – Reflection on the Ten Commandments also reveals the *good news* that the negative consequences for our failure to keep the stipulations it outlines have been paid for by the only human being who perfectly did, or could, keep them: Jesus Christ our Savior.

4 – Finally, the goal of the Ten Commandments is realized in the *good news* that God has sent his Spirit to transform us into those who by increasing degrees obey them.

So yes, the Ten Commandments are indeed good news! Because by obeying them (as we are empowered by the Spirit) we will experience the life-generating, -enhancing, and -furthering the relationship with God and one another that constitutes a maximally fulfilling life.

Adapted from an article by Michael Williams, PH.D., HarperCollins Christian Publishing. 501 Nelson Place, Nashville, TN 37214, USA. July 3, 2023.



This Sunday we are beginning a new sermon series called A New Kind of Kingdom. We are continuing in the Gospel of Matthew with a series of teachings and parables about the kingdom of God in Matthew chapters 11-13. This new kind of kingdom that Jesus inaugurates is one in which we find rest for our souls, we learn to listen, we discover that we grow in the midst of weeds, and we live in a community of grace. I hope to see you on Sunday mornings in July!

Grace and peace,

Pastor David B. Clark

Food Pantry Needs for July



Mandarin Oranges, pineapple, corn, green beans, sugar-free Jell-O, pudding mixes, pancake syrup, soda, graham crackers, cake, brownie, and muffin mixes, potato flakes, tuna and chicken helper, ketchup, mustard, salt and pepper, disposable razors, shampoo, and crème rinse.

There are times when people who use the Food Pantry come to the pantry on foot. They are then forced to walk home carrying, pushing, or pulling several pounds of food. Southwest Iowa Transit, for a very reasonable fee of \$5.00, will take individuals with their food items home.



If you are interested in helping pay for these fees, simply seal your cash (whatever you would like to give) in a plain envelope and add it to your donated food items.



We are looking for special music for the summer. If you are interested in providing special music or know of someone that might be interested, please contact Mace Hensen or call the office and the message will be forwarded to him.



V.B.S. Save the Date!!!

When: Tuesday, Aug. 1-Aug. 3, 5-8:20 pm (dinner provided)
(Check in at 4:30 Tuesday, 4:30 at St. Mary's Catholic Church
Wednesday and Thursday will be the regular start time of 5:00pm)
Wednesday, Aug. 3, 7:45, Parents are invited and encouraged to join
their child for the VBS program, located at St. Mary's Catholic Church

Who: Any child from 4 years to just completed 6th grade

Where: Drop off and pick up at St. Mary's Catholic Church

Cost: **FREE!!!!** The Shenandoah Ecumenical Vacation Bible School Program makes this a fantastic opportunity possible for your child. Grants and donations from the 6 sponsoring churches makes VBS free of charge.

VBS is a basic message that we send to children that God Loves Us. All children are welcome to attend- feel free to bring a friend!

VBS is sponsored by the following churches: Congregational, St. Mary's Catholic, Emmanuel Lutheran, Community of Christ, United Methodist, and Presbyterian. Registration available at churches, food pantry, Paper Trail, swimming pool.

Registration forms are available on the Welcome Center Counter.