



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

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June 25, 2014

Biblical Guides to Living The Ten Commandments (Part 1)

² *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;* ³ *you shall have no other gods before me.* Exodus 20:2-3 NRSV

The Bible is not primarily a book of rules or directions for how to live our lives. Much of the material contained in scripture can certainly be used that way but, as any graduate of Disciple Bible Study can tell you, the primary purpose of scripture is to teach us about God, teach us about ourselves and teach us about our relationship to God. Much of the bible is made up of stories about people who were far from ideal in either character or behavior, stories about the life and teachings of Jesus and the writings of the earliest Christians who explored what it meant to be Christian.

Nevertheless, there are many passages of scripture that contain guidelines for living our lives. These include the Ten Commandments, portions of Deuteronomy and Leviticus, Proverbs and the Wisdom Literature, portions of the Gospels such as the Sermons on the Mount and the Plain, the parables of Jesus and the Epistles. Over the coming weeks I invite you to look at these passages more carefully and see what you hear God saying to you.

The Top Four Commandments

There is a hierarchy of the Commandments. The first four deal with our relationship to God. Unless we have lives that are centered on God, we are bound to go astray.

² *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;* ³ *you shall have no other gods before me.* Exodus 20:2-3 NRSV.

The **Shema** (shuh-mah'; Heb., 'Hear you...')¹ is the declaration of faith of Israel. *Hear O Israel, Yahweh is God, Yahweh alone.* In the understanding of the faith of Israel, Exodus 20:3 is a bit misleading. One could not have other gods because there are no other gods. There is only God, who created all that we can know and perceive and all that is hidden. Our understanding of God begins with the affirmation that there is only God. Over the centuries the people of Israel, and Christians as well, have fallen into the trap of apostasy; worshipping other "gods."

Classic apostasy, worshipping the gods of other cultures, is not much of a problem in our society. But apostasy, ‘worshipping’ other gods remains a problem. To worship something is to place your trust and confidence in something. That which you cherish above everything else is what you worship. The two most common substitutes for God in our culture are money and ourselves. It is very easy in our culture to become so fixated on the power of money, wealth, to protect us and insure our happiness that it does become our god. We are also a somewhat narcissistic society. We are very focused on pleasing ourselves and often take the view that we are ‘in control.’ So long as we are ‘in control,’ we assure ourselves, all will be well. God’s commandment is to acknowledge that ultimate control belongs to God and only God can be trusted. Only God is worthy of our worship.

⁴ *You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Exodus 20:4 NRSV.*

Making representations of god is an activity that seems to be ubiquitous across societies. All cultures, it seems, desired to put a face on god or at least have something upon which to focus their attention. Sometimes these idols were distinctly human, as were many of the gods of Greece and Rome. The Canaanites represented Astarte, a goddess of fertility, as a woman with exaggerated feminine features about to give birth. Other times, gods were represented as idols of animal form. Then there were the representations of gods who were part human and part animal as well as representations of fantastic creatures who were ‘god.’ The people of Israel even tried to make an image of God who had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Exodus 32.

The problem with idols is that they place limits on God. To some extent to make an image of God is to attempt to bring God under our control; to contain God. Instead, we worship God who can never be fully comprehended by the human mind and therefore can never be represented by anything we make or conceive. God defines our limits, we do not define God’s limits.

⁷ *You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Exodus 20:7 NRSV.*

The classic understanding of this passage is based upon the King James translation of using the Lord’s name in vain. However, that translation has led to treating this commandment as a prohibition against cursing that uses God’s name. The NRSV and other modern translations refer to the wrongful use of God’s name which expands our understanding. For instance, Jim Bakker of PTL Club fame violated this commandment when he misused God’s name to raise money that he then embezzled from his followers. Politicians misuse God’s name when they proclaim that it is contrary to scripture, and therefore God’s will, to help the poor. [Note: I acknowledge that some would accuse me of misusing God’s name for a political agenda supporting help for the poor. However, I’d be glad to discuss the biblical support for helping the poor as opposed to the biblical support for abandoning or ignoring the needs of the poor.] Without question, cursing using the name of God is also a misuse of God’s name.

⁸ *“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” Exodus 20:8*

There is an old Jewish proverb that explains that God gave us the story of creation in the first chapter of Genesis to remind us to keep the Sabbath. God worked six days and rested on the seventh, and so should we. The easiest way to understand this passage is to ask yourself, “What is Holy?” The answer from scripture is that only God and those things that serve the purposes of God are holy. The Sabbath day is Holy because it is meant to be a day that serves the purposes of God. It is a day upon which we contemplate our relationship to

God and all that God has done in the world. It is easy to become so involved in our work and everyday lives that we forget God. The Sabbath is a day to stop and contemplate God's claim on our lives.

The next article in this series will consider the rest of the Ten Commandments. The primary focus of these commandments is upon those things that tend to interfere with our relationships with others.

July 6th and 13th

I will be on vacation the first two weeks in July. I've arranged for coverage by two pastors very special to me. The first is Rev. Bob Lewis who will be with you on July 6th. Bob Lewis was my pastor at Franklin First UMC where I entered the ministry. He gave me my first opportunity to preach and he helped me explore my call to ministry. Among other appointments he served as the Campus Minister at the Wesley Foundation at Tennessee Tech for 13 years and as Senior Pastor at Columbia First UMC, Belle Meade UMC and Franklin First UMC.

Rev. Regina Proctor will be with you on July 13th. I met Regina while she was at Vanderbilt Divinity School. She has served at Belle Meade UMC and as a Chaplain resident at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. She is currently the pastor of Congregational Care and Worship at Franklin First UMC.

I will be back in the office on July 14th and Jeanne and I will be with you again on July 20th. Have a safe and happy July 4th weekend.

Vacation Bible School At Trinity

We are organizing a "Going Back to School" Vacation Bible School for a weekend in early August. Watch for the exact dates soon. If you wish to help, and haven't yet volunteered, please contact Julia Moore, Jeanne Rybolt or Rev. Meaker.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Jeanne and I would like you to join us this February on a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. We will leave on February 16 for nine days of Biblical discovery, returning on February 25th. We will be part of a larger group of primarily United Methodists from all over Middle and West Tennessee. This is a special tour organized by Bishop William McAlilly, the Bishop for the Tennessee and Memphis Conferences.

I first visited the Holy Land in 2000. Jeanne and I went back in 2005 and again in 2012. Before I went the first time I was somewhat cynical about the upcoming experience. I didn't think that it would have much of an effect on me. But, when you stand on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, or travel to the Synagogue at Capernaum, you suddenly realize that you are likely walking ground that Christ walked. When you pray among the Olive trees in Gethsemane, stand in the prison cell contained in the House of Caiaphas, or see the name of Pilate inscribed on a monument in Caesarea, the events surrounding the imprisonment, trial and passion of Christ take on new meaning; a new reality.

Brochures for the trip, including exact costs and travel itineraries, are available in my office. I'll also schedule a time this summer to share photographs taken on my previous trips to Israel and answer questions about the trip. I hope you will prayerfully consider participating in this faith building experience.

The Poverty and Justice Bible

The Poverty & Justice Bible is a bible that highlights each passage of scripture that deals with the issues of poverty and justice. There are more than 2000 references in scripture to poverty and justice, as opposed to four or five on such controversial subjects as homosexual acts or marriage. Yet many Christians seem to think that helping the poor is a pointless and even harmful act. As an on-going part of this newsletter, I will be providing citations to passages from the Old and New Testaments each week that deal with what scripture tells us about poverty and justice. If you are interested in learning more about *The Poverty & Justice Bible* you can check on Amazon.com or go to www.Justicebible.org.

⁸ *God sees that justice is done,
and he watches over everyone
who is faithful to him.*

⁹ *With wisdom you will learn
what is right
and honest and fair.*

Proverbs 2:8-9 CEV

Proverbs is intent upon providing an understanding of 'wisdom' which could also be understood as 'the way of God.' Here we have repeated again the, by now familiar, refrain that God is a God of Justice. God is certainly a God of Love as well, but Love in the absence of Justice is meaningless. In all our dealings we are to be just, honest and fair.

⁸ *When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.'* ⁹ *When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.* ¹⁰ *Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.* ¹¹ *And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner,* ¹² *saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'* ¹³ *But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?'* ¹⁴ *Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you.* ¹⁵ *Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?'* ¹⁶ *So the last will be first, and the first will be last."* Matthew 20:8-18

What is 'fair' is often in the eye of the beholder. Yet Jesus invites us to expand our concept of what is fair. In the parable of the vineyard workers from Matthew, some of the workers are hired in the early morning and work hard all day. Others are hired at midday and some at the very end of the day. The first workers were hired for the usual daily wage. The others only with a promise of what is 'right or fair.' When the day is over, all are paid the same. Each got what he was promised but those who worked the longest believed that they should have been paid more than those who worked the least. Any labor organizer would agree with them. But Jesus reminds those who hear the parable, and reminds us, that God will always give what is fair and may be generous as well.

Bible Study

Our Thursday morning Bible study will take a break for the month of July and the first two weeks in August. We will continue with the study of 1 Samuel on August 21st at 10:30 AM.

I believe that the study of scriptures with other Christians is an essential part of our journey as Disciples. If you would like to be a part of a bible study at another time, during the day or evening, please contact me. If we can interest four or five people in gathering at a particular time I would be glad to lead another study.

Disciple Bible Study Opportunity

Disciple Bible Study is a 32 week study of the bible from Genesis to Revelation. It has guided many people to a deeper understanding of scripture and their faith over the years. Many in the Church have completed this study.

I have been approached by two people who would be interested in a Disciple Bible Study to meet from 7:00 to 9:00 on Thursday evenings. I would like to get at least five more people to participate in this study. If you have considered undertaking a study of the bible before, this is a wonderful opportunity. If you are interested in being a part of this group, please contact me.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Sarah Jordan	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Mac McAfee	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson	

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

June 29th Sermon: *Abraham and Isaac*: Once or twice every decade some mentally unbalanced person murders their children on the basis that God told them to do it. Most often they are using the story of Abraham and Isaac as their starting point. I want to look at this difficult text and seek to hear the Gospel message that it contains. My texts are Matthew 10:40–42 and Genesis 22:1–14.

July 6th: Sermon: *Lord of the Dance*. Rev. Bob Lewis is preaching. His texts are Romans 7:15–25a and Matthew 11:16-19; 25-30 .

July 13th: Sermon: *Listening for the Heart of God* . Rev. Regina Proctor is preaching. Her texts are Romans 8:1–11 and Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.

July 20th: Sermon: *Do You Know A Weed When You see It?* My wife's preference is that I not weed any garden she plants because I'm certain to pull out something that is not a weed. Who knew that I could be so in sync with Jesus? My texts are Genesis 28:10–19a and Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43.

Worship Leaders Schedule

June 29

Marty Bauguess, **Liturgist**
Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Greeters**
Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Ushers**

July 6

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**
Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**
Jason & Lindsey Aldred, **Ushers**

Announcements

Please consider being a volunteer in the nursery. There is an opportunity each Sunday for you to be blessed by spending time with the youngest among us. Both men and women are welcome to be a part of this ministry.

There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board for volunteers to sign up to assist in the nursery or Sunday School. Please sign up for one or more Sunday's.

Thank you for being a part of this vital ministry of our church.

Sunday, June 15 - "Enough-Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity," a five part Sunday School series, will begin. **Please join us in the middle Sunday School classroom, gathering at 9:45 am and class at 10:00 am.**

"Enough" is an invitation to rediscover the Bible's wisdom on prudent financial practices. Find the keys to experience contentment, overcoming fear, and discovering joy through simplicity and generosity.

Please join the Companions in Christ class for this series!

There are sign-up lists on the Bulletin Board for volunteers who will prepare communion as well as hosting the First Sunday meal. Please sign up!

June Birthdays

Lynn McGill, Jo Cotton, Nancy Conway, Richard Stevens, Larry Eastwood, Kenneth Stevens,

June Pollard

Happy Birthday to each of you!