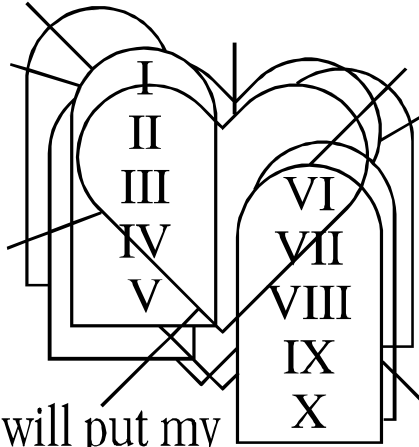


# The Daily Walk



I will put my  
law in their minds &  
write it on their hearts.

Jeremiah 31:33

**Trinity Presbyterian Church  
Berwyn, Pennsylvania**

**June 25 - July 29, 2007**

Summer, 2007

Dear Daily Walkers,

The Ten Commandments . . . what comes to mind? For the next ten weeks, we will walk with the “ten commandments” as they come to us in the book of Exodus, and seek to learn and grow in faithfulness.

The “ten words,” as they are called in the Bible, have had an interesting history in Christian worship. They were pretty much absent until the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation when Luther and Calvin and others sought to teach the church. Luther and Calvin had different interpretations of the role of the “ten words” in the Christian life. For Luther, their primary function was to convict us of our sin, our failure to live as God desired. For Calvin, their primary function was to teach how to live as people forgiven and renewed in Christ. This difference leads to their different places in worship: before the prayer of confession, or after the assurance of God’s grace.

The writers for this and the next edition of The Daily Walk were given as resources excerpts from J. Ellsworth Kalas’ The Ten Commandments from the Back Side, and from the “Larger Catechism” of the Westminster Confession of faith. I recommend both to all who want to explore the meanings of the “ten words” in our life today. Enjoy the walk.

In Christ,  
Jay Wilkins

## LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

### The Ten Commandments

*“The Larger Catechism” (17th century England), from our Book of Confessions, instructs us in the applicability of the moral law to all people; those who are “unregenerate” and those who are “regenerate”. We would probably substitute “Christian” or “believer” and “non-believer” today. It then suggests that the moral law is “summarily comprehended” in the Ten Commandments. The Catechism then gives us rules for properly understanding and complying with the Ten Commandments. I remember hearing my mother, who was reared in the Southern Methodist church, speak of having to learn the Catechism as a child – I called her to confirm the validity of my memory, which is sometimes faulty these days! (In this case it didn’t fail me!). By the time I became acquainted with her, she had been wooed into the Southern Baptist church by my father, and we didn’t have anything I recognized as a Catechism. Many of my Presbyterian friends my age also had to memorize the*

*Catechism. Today, though, the Catechism, both in the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, seems to have a place, and a small one, only in the Confirmation process. And I found this to be true (at least perceived to be true) by friends in the Lutheran and Episcopalian churches. It seems that the Catholics still use it to a greater degree in the instruction of their children. I don't know why this was interesting to me – it just was! Perhaps because I hadn't had much experience with the Catechism. Also, my research was limited to the women in my wife's lunch bunch and the mothers at the school bus stop – you might come up with a different impression in your own experiences.*

### **June 25 – July 1, 2007**

*Begin at the beginning; the first commandment – Exodus 20:3*

*Thou shalt have no other gods before me. KJV*

*You shall have no other gods before me. RSV*

*You shall have no other gods before me. NIV*

*The language in the original texts must be very unambiguous; the different translations seem to say the same thing.*

#### **Monday, June 25      Why are the Ten Commandments important to us today?**

Why were they important to the Hebrew people at the time of Moses? One of the things they did was to give the people a basis for living their lives in a way that God wanted them to – a basis by which they could be judged. Are we in any way less needful of such a basis? Jesus made it unnecessary (and unable) for us to use the law as a Key to the Kingdom, but he did not relieve us of the responsibility of complying with the precepts of the law.

#### **Tuesday, June 26      What does the first commandment really say?**

First, why start with the first commandment, other than because it's first? You may have a favorite commandment, or one that speaks more directly to you on a particularly important issue. The fact is that all the following commandments rest on the foundation established by the first. Without that foundation there is no rational basis for any of the following guidance. The first commandment assumes that we belong to God. Everything in our life is his. Therefore, we should have only one God – our God. Nothing else in our lives should be more important, or have a greater priority, than anything God might want us to do. The many things that get in the way

of accomplishing what God wants us to do must be able to be recognized and overcome.

**Wednesday, June 27 What are we required to do?**

We are required to know and acknowledge that God is the only true God; and that he is our God. We must worship and glorify him in every respect falling under those words, worship and glorify. We must call on him, praising and thanking him. We must obey him in any way we understand what obey means. We must please him. We must be sorrowful in any instant in which we offend him. We must walk humbly with him. These are all paraphrases of the instructions found in “The Greater Catechism.” These are powerful instructions when we apply them to the activities of daily living.

**Thursday, June 28 What sins are forbidden in the first commandment?**

The sins forbidden, not terribly surprisingly, tend to mirror image the requirements, continuing with paraphrases: atheism, in denying or not having a God (note the big G); idolatry, in having more than one god, or any others with, or instead of, the true God. Not obeying all or any of the other commandments which follow from accepting our one true God. Praying or giving religious worship to saints, angels or any other creatures (I doubt that this is in the Catholic Catechism). Any compacts or consulting with the devil (and how do we determine this, except by constant prayer?). Ascribing the good we accomplish or are associated with to any source other than God – certainly not to ourselves.

**Friday, June 29 What did Jesus say? (Mark 12:29-31)**

When asked what the most important commandment was, Jesus answered “Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’”. J. Ellsworth Kalas points out that in answering the question, Jesus added the part about loving your neighbor. Kalas continues by saying that if we accept Jesus’ first statement we cannot escape the second. “To be like God is to love god, and to love God is to love our neighbor.”

**Saturday, June 30 What would be the result of obeying the first commandment?**

I think there would be a different emphasis on everything we think or do. Checking up on our priorities, to see where our true interest lies, would be a first step.

Seeking the proper guidance through prayer first, then consultation with those in whom we have great confidence as to their allegiance to God (not as a “go, no go” input, but as “water testing”). Anticipating the effect of our actions on others and the way they might help or hinder God’s will. Always asking to be guided in understanding what God’s will might be. Always seeking to find what other “gods” we have in our life. It’s too easy to assume that what we want is what God wants. How very humbling is this first commandment!

## LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

**July 2 – 8, 2007**

*We continue to meditate on the “moral law,” a concept or mental image (idea) of what is right or good. The Christian Bible sets out a standard for the use of all of us in the Ten Commandments, received from God by Moses amidst thunders, earthquakes, and trumpet blasts on Mount Sinai, informing us of the holy nature and will of God and of our duty binding us to walk accordingly. The first four commandments have to do with our attitude toward God; the following six, with our attitude toward our fellowman.*

### **MONDAY, July 2**

The focus this week is on the Second Commandment, which reads in the Revised Standard Version:

You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. (Exodus 20: 4).

The words “graven image” are not heard spoken of at all in today’s culture; instead a simile like idols is used. The media finds a way to tempt us with their wiles. The Psalmist reminds us:

Hear, O my people, while I admonish you!

O Israel, if you would but listen to me!

I am the Lord your God,

who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

There shall be no strange god among you;

you shall not bow down to a foreign god. (Psalms 81: 8, 10, 9).

**TUESDAY, July 3**

The Book of Confessions of our church contains in Chapter 7 the Larger Catechism and its questions about the duties required of us by the Second Commandment. Listed as duties are “the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God [has] instituted in his Word.” Eight positive things are particularly mentioned, including “prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ;” and concluding with “also the disapproving, detesting, opposing all false worship, and . . . removing..... it and all monuments of idolatry.”(7.218). That last part may be the hardest of all.

**WEDNESDAY, July 4**

What are the sins forbidden in the Second Commandment? The list is long. “All devising, counseling, commanding, using, and any [way] approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself; the making any representation of God . . . either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever; all worshipping of it, . . . ; all superstitious devices, . . . ; all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God [has] appointed.” (7.219).

**THURSDAY, July 5**

We may be rather astonished that this commandment carries the severe warning:

You shall not bow down to them or [worship] them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the [parents] upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who [reject] me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20 : 5-6)

The commandment is there, like it or not, and it was fearfully serious to the pious Jews. Sadly, Israel broke this commandment proscribing false gods before Moses had completed delivery of the tables of stone. (Exodus 32: 1-4).

**FRIDAY, July 6**

The great Hebrew prophets who eventually came on the scene found idol worship not only repugnant but also absurd. But before we become too condescending toward the idol maker's superstition, we should consider the susceptibility of the patterns of our own culture - hotels without a thirteenth floor, a sports hero indulging in carefully defined notions that he considers as significant. Idols are manageable, and we humans are always looking for a manageable god. (Kalas).

**SATURDAY, July 7**

How precisely pertinent it is that we explore God's gift to us of rules for independence in the week we celebrate Independence Day. Here is the issue in Jesus' conversation with the woman of Samaria. Her key theological question was one that grounded and limited God; where should God be worshiped - on the mountain or in Jerusalem? Neither, Jesus said, because "God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4: 22-24) (Kalas). If you visit the campus of Syracuse University, be sure to enter Hendricks Chapel and see these words of wisdom from John's Gospel etched overhead on the bottom of the rotunda.

## LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

July 9 – 15, 2007

### The Third Commandment

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

#### **MONDAY, July 9**

God’s name is special because it carries his personal identity. Using it frivolously or in a curse is so common today that we may fail to realize how serious it is. The way we use God’s name conveys how we really feel about him. We should respect his name and use it appropriately, speaking it in praise or worship rather than in curse or jest. We should not take lightly the abuse or dishonor of his name.

The prophet Jeremiah, speaking in God’s stead, chided the people for their misuse of the Name: “But you have abused my name, because you broke your agreement” (Jeremiah 34:14). God’s Name is so much God’s person that when we break our contract with God, we dishonor the Name.

#### **TUESDAY, July 10**

In the second commandment it says: “...for the Lord will not leave unpunished the one who takes his name in vain.” Christ, the prophetic Spirit, teaches that it is not God who punishes us for what we do, but that we punish ourselves through the law that says: “What you sow, you will reap.” It is not God who sows, but we; and what we sow is what we will reap. And so, we will come to feel the results of everything we do and let happen, because we are each responsible for ourselves.

In Ecclesiastes Solomon shows that we should enjoy life, but this does not exempt us from obeying God’s commandments. (Eccl 2:13)

#### **WEDNESDAY, July 11**

God’s name is powerful, more powerful than we shall ever perceive. Because God’s name is available to us, so is the power of that name. If we use it *in vain*-in a fashion contrary to its character, or in trivial fashion, perhaps even debasing it-then we have *wasted* it. God has been divinely generous in revealing his name, and thus making himself available to us. What could be a greater insult to that generosity than to use the gift carelessly or crudely? That is, *in vain*. And how could we be more destructive of our own welfare than to misuse such a gift? “Your name and your renown,” Isaiah said “are the soul’s desire” (Isaiah 26:8).

### **THURSDAY, July 12**

The devout ancient Jews feared that even when using God's name religiously, they might slip over a line into unwarranted intimacy. As a result, they came to feel that the most sacred name for God, YHWH (Yahweh), was better not used at all, except on the annual Day of Atonement, when the high priest spoke it in the Temple. They believed that the Tabernacle (Deuteronomy 12:11) and Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 8:20) were specific places where God's Name would dwell, and they were therefore cautious about using it in other circumstances and settings.

### **FRIDAY, July 13**

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, Jesus began with a name for God, and then with an attitude toward the name: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9). By giving God a relational name-indeed, a family name-Jesus indicated the nature of our approach to God. God is a Person and is personal; the name says so. God is to be addressed as One with whom we dare to claim relationship. When Jesus encouraged his followers to call God "father", he gave a special claim on God's attention. We are neither strangers nor helpless suppliants; we are family members who dare to address God with the utmost intimacy. But if anyone should presume upon that intimacy, Jesus reminds us that God's name- whatever name we use-should be "hallowed" in our using. We do not take God's name "*in vain*", we *hallow* it

### **SATURDAY, July 14**

What ever we ask of God, Jesus said, we should ask in his name, and whatever we ask in his name, God will grant (John 16:23-24).

Jesus meant that we should pray in a spirit consistent with his character and will. To pray in Jesus' name is to assume Jesus' will and purpose. It is also clear that Jesus intended to add to our authority in prayer. How do we approach God? Not on our own authority, but in the name of Jesus. When we accept Jesus Christ as Lord, we gain just such authority.

## LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

July 16 – 22, 2007

### *The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment – Exodus 20:8-11*

*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.*

### **MONDAY, July 16<sup>th</sup>**

In the 1960s, our Sunday routine was somewhat different than it is today. In the morning, we would have a quick breakfast, and then head to church, where we would first attend Sunday school for an hour, then the worship service for another hour. With the “meet and greet” intervals before, between and after, church time consisted of our entire morning. Often, in between Sunday school and worship, Dad would give us a dollar, and my siblings and I would run down to the corner store and buy packs of sour orange roll candies – much better than LifeSavers. We would savor them during the worship service. When we got home around noon, we would have a light lunch as a family. For a brief period of time, 6 months to a year, perhaps, the entire family would take a nap. This was most definitely my parents’ idea. My brother, sister and I squirmed during naptime, and often my father would lie in the bed with us, wrapping us in his embrace - to keep us still. I remember Sunday afternoons would often include a family activity, like a card or board game. I remember playing a card game based on gin rummy, but the deck of cards was based on famous authors and we would have to get sets of their novels to win the game. To this day, this is why I know that James Fennimore Cooper wrote *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Pathfinder*.

What do all these ramblings have to do with the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment? I’m not sure. But I remember how different Sunday was when I was a kid. There was a different rhythm to the day. Sunday was not at all like Saturday. Now that I am an adult, we are fairly diligent about attending church each Sunday. But Sunday does not seem so unique anymore. It is just one of the two days in the weekend. When did it lose its unique rhythm? And why? And can it be recovered?

Perhaps during today’s devotional time, you will allow yourself to get lost in your memories of past Sundays. What were your traditions? Even if your family did

not spend Sunday in church or there was no Sabbath day in your childhood, I'll bet you remember that life was different during Sundays. Allow yourself to remember the differences - good, bad or otherwise.

### **TUESDAY, July 17<sup>th</sup>**

What makes a day Sabbath?

In college, one of my friends in the dorm, Kenny, was a devout Jew. Starting Friday night at sundown, he would obey all the rules required for observing the Sabbath. I was surprised to learn just how many rules there were, and the rationale behind them. For example, if Kenny wanted to go spend Friday night at his girlfriend's house, and if he wanted to drive his car, he had to schedule his trip to ensure his arrival at her apartment before sundown. If he weren't sure he could make it in time, he would take the bus.

What in the world does driving your car, or riding on the bus, have to do with observing the Sabbath? Kenny explained that when one drives their car, it might malfunction. For example, he could get a flat tire. This might lead him to change the flat, which would be considered "working on the Sabbath". So to avoid this temptation, his rules forbade him from driving his car on the Sabbath.

There are hundreds of rules like this in the Bible, all geared towards keeping the Sabbath holy. The ancient Jews recognized that God's fourth commandment was indeed a gift from God, and they attempted to codify it to ensure that they would abide the commandment.

Today, many of these rules seem quite arcane. It seems that man's attempts to make rules enforcing something holy end up falling far short of God's original intention. Jesus recognized this. Take a moment to read Matthew 12:9-12.

The Pharisees attempted to trap Jesus when he was confronted with the choice of healing a sick man on the Sabbath day. Jesus avoided the trap by turning the situation around on the Pharisees. His final word is instructive, I think. "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

### **WEDNESDAY, July 18<sup>th</sup>**

What makes a day Sabbath?

My wife loves to work in the garden. On any given day of the week, if the weather is nice, and her schedule permits, she will work in the flowerbeds, the shrubbery, or on some other project that makes our yard look beautiful.

Ancient Jewish law would probably not condone this behavior on a Sunday. But for my wife, working in the garden is not so much work as it is relaxation. It is

her way of stepping out of the normal stresses of the week, and enjoying God's creation. Although I have not talked with her about this topic specifically, I am certain she would say that gardening is one of her pleasures, a true gift from God.

What does this story say about how we might observe Sabbath today, in 2007? Certainly, our world is very different from 2,000 years ago. In being faithful to the commandment, I think we must look for ways to claim one day as uniquely ours, to celebrate it with our God, to enjoy the day and rest in it.

### **THURSDAY, July 19<sup>th</sup>**

What makes a day Sabbath?

Is it important that the Sabbath day be a Sunday? Why not a Wednesday? Jews and Muslims celebrate their Sabbath between Friday night and Saturday night. What about folks whose jobs require them to work on the weekend? Can they set another day of the week apart, rest in it, and make it their Sabbath?

A rapidly changing world challenges us to find ways to faithfully follow God's commandment to observe the Sabbath. While I don't know the answers to the questions I raise above, I do find that there is something both enriching and revitalizing about celebrating the Sabbath day with others. I think there may be something important about being in community with other Christians, and one way we can do this is to celebrate our gift from God, our day of Sabbath, together.

### **FRIDAY, July 20<sup>th</sup>**

This is the 18<sup>th</sup> time that I have contributed to the Daily Walk. One of the first times I contributed, one of the verses from the lectionary was Psalm 127. The psalm resonated with me then, and has remained one of my favorites ever since. The poetry of the psalm seems appropriate now, as I contemplate the value of observing a Sabbath day.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early, and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil, for he gives to his beloved [rest].” - Psalm 127:1-2*

This psalm speaks to me in a number of ways. It reminds me that all things are possible, only through the grace of God. It reminds me to quit stressing out over all of the unfinished work back at the office, to stop “eating the bread of anxious toil.” (What a wonderful phrase!) And, it reminds me that God's perfect gift to his beloved is rest.

Earlier, I mentioned that as a child, my father used to force us to take naps on

Sunday afternoons. Now, as an adult, I love Sunday afternoon naps. Similar to other facets of my faith journey, I have grown to understand a day of rest is indeed a special gift from God. I guess it should not surprise me. After all, it made God's top 10 list!

### SATURDAY, July 21<sup>st</sup>

Well, what can I say? I've run out of things to say. Maybe I'll consider this sixth day of the Daily Walk my personal Sabbath from writing.

If any of you are interested in reading a wonderful commentary on this topic, I strongly encourage you to get a copy of J. Ellsworth Kalas' *The Ten Commandments from the Back Side* from Jay. It was one of the reference materials he supplied us, and I found it very instructive and inspiring in preparing this edition of the Daily Walk.



"Thanks a bunch. I'll just run these by our committee and pass them along."

**LECTIONARY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE**  
**July 23 – 29, 2007**

**MONDAY, July 23:**

The fifth commandment reads: “Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” The Hebrew word for “honor” that is used in this text means literally “to treat as weighty.” To treat someone as “weighty” certainly means more than giving him or her a kind of lip-service respect. It means more than humoring someone or simply tolerating him or her. If we treat our parents as weighty, then that means giving them genuine respect and consideration.

In our culture, older adults are not often given much respect. The media celebrates youth, and our children and grandchildren look to their famous peers, no matter how banal or undeserving of respect they might be, for guidance. The Larger Catechism says that children should imitate the virtues and graces of their parents. Do we ever see this in our culture? My guess is that most of you reading these words are parents of grown children, are grandparents, perhaps even great-grandparents. Many of you no longer have living parents. Rather than being the ones for whom the commandment is directed, you are the ones to be honored. Do you experience this honor in your life? Or do you feel dishonored, pushed aside, your “virtues and graces” ignored or even scorned? Is there something that can be done?

**TUESDAY, July 24:**

In the days of Abraham and Isaac, there were very few competing voices or opinions that Isaac could choose to listen to over that of his father. Today that is not the case. However, kids (including our adult “kids”) do still listen to the voices of the elders they love. They give those voices *greater weight* than they do the voices of their culture, whether it appears that way or not. J. Ellsworth Kalas writes, “The failure is not in their listening, but in our speaking. We must speak winsomely, convincingly, and with integrity, because we will have to be heard over a bewildering cacophony of voices.” How do we speak winsomely, convincingly and with integrity? How can we be heard over the television, the internet and the radio?

The authors of the Interpretation series of commentaries, point out that God’s grace *precedes* God’s law. He liberated the Israelites from captivity before he gave them His Law. Perhaps an answer lies there. Children and grandchildren, both young and adult, are motivated and influenced by *love*. Dallas Willard tells us that before children want to obey Jesus, they must come to love him. Our children and

grandchildren operate the same way. The more they love us the more they listen to us and the more they seek our approval. Certainly, being loving is easier and less complicated than being convincing!

### **WEDNESDAY, July 25:**

Have you honored your own parents by keeping their virtues and graces alive? Think back to the phrases you associate with your parents or even your grandparents. When I think of my father, I think of the phrase “Measure twice and cut once.” My mother always said “Nothing you learn is ever wasted.” What did your mother and father repeat over and over to you? Have you incorporated these teachings into your life? By doing so, you honor them. Have you repeated them to your children and grandchildren? When I think of my grandparents and anything they might have said to me, my mind goes blank. How sad! I wish I could remember. How can we preserve those memories for future generations? Could you write down what you remember and share those memories with the younger generation?

### **THURSDAY, July 26:**

The fifth commandment is unique in that it has a promise attached: “so that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” One way to look at this promise is by understanding that the way we treat our parents is observed by the younger generation, and in turn, it is how we will be treated by them when we are old. Many of you are familiar with the Grimm’s fairy tale of an old man treated abusively by his son and daughter-in-law. Because he had tremors and made a mess at the table, they forced him to sit in the corner and eat from a bowl. When he broke the bowl, they gave him a wooden trough to eat out of because he was a “pig.” These ungrateful adult children were brought up short when they observed their own little boy carving a small trough out of wood. The child told them he was preparing for their old age, when they would be forced to eat from a trough. Needless to say, they invited the old man back to the table!

Speaking of remembering a parent’s teachings, my mother used to tell me this story! I hated it and dreaded the retelling of it. But I never forgot it.

### **FRIDAY, July 27:**

I was in the bookstore the other day and saw the title When Good Things Happen to Good People. I had to smile. So often we hear versions of When Bad Things Happen to Good People. We hear “it rains on the just and the unjust.” That is certainly true. Being “good” does not protect us from life’s problems and tragedies.

And *yet*, being “good” does often lead to a good life. Here is another interpretation of the promise attached to the fifth commandment. It could, in fact, be attached to any of the commandments.

While I am not preaching a doctrine of prosperity, insisting as some modern preachers do that a Christian life leads to wealth, I do believe that right living leads to happiness. This is something the Israelites believed as well. This is something I try to share with my own kids. When you follow God’s laws, your life will, in general, work out better. Today kids will often talk about “karma.” Karma is another way of saying “what goes around comes around.” It’s another way of saying “you reap what you sow.” I believe karma is a spiritual law that is universally true. That is why the concept of ‘reaping what you sow’ is embraced in every major religion. It might be a point of conversation with the younger generation. You might say, “my grandfather used to say, ‘whatever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.’ I believe you kids call that ‘karma!’”

### **SATURDAY, July 28:**

The fifth commandment comes at an interesting place within the ten. The ancient rabbis felt that the Commandments were divided on two tables so that one contained those laws having to do with duty to God, and the other those laws having to do with our duty to humanity. This commandment is on the first tablet, as the last of the laws of piety toward God, because for children, parents stand in the place of God. So the Talmud said, “When a person conducts himself by honoring his mother and father, God is heard to say, ‘It is as though I were living with them and they honored me.’” A thirteenth century rabbi put the relationship this way, “father and mother should be honored as God is honored, because all three have been partners in thy creation.”

It is also interesting to note that the mother is given the same importance as the father in the commandment. This is significant because the Israelite society was very much a Patriarch. It recalls to us the many other times in Scripture when God is referred to as a mother or in other feminine terms.