

This is the Christian Faith

The Second Table of the Law (Commandments 4-6)

The Fourth Commandment

- ⌘ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 1 John 3:23

The two go together!

A Christian loves God because God loves him. But love does not stop there. God's love working in us goes out in all directions to our fellow men.

God asks us to see other people as He sees them. Of course some people annoy us. We are all sinful. We all need God's forgiving love. That is just the point. God daily forgives us for Jesus' sake. We are to deal with other people as our Father does. He loves them as He loves us. By loving them we show our love to God.

In the last seven commandments God tells us what it means to love our neighbor. He talks first about our closest "neighbors." These are our parents and others in authority over us; they are included in the *Fourth Commandment*.

Honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God
so that we do not despise or anger
our parents and other authorities,
but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: God Is to be Honored in His Representatives.

Christians believe that God is the ruler of this world. They believe that He rules through various kinds of people. Recall that Jesus said to Pilate:

- ⌘ "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. John 19:11a

We believe that God gives some of His power to parents to rule their children. To respect and obey parents is to respect God. To despise them is to despise God.

- ⌘ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Colossians 3:20

The Scriptures give many examples of God's anger over disobedient children and His pleasure over the obedient. Jesus set the perfect example. He showed His duty to His heavenly Father in the temple, and He showed love and honor to His earthly parents.

✘ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. Luke 2:51a

On the cross, Jesus was at work redeeming a lost world. Yet He took the time to see that His mother was cared for.

The Bible warns us by telling us of Absalom's despising of his father, King David. With equal clearness it pictures Joseph, second in power to the king of Egypt, honoring his aged father.

We believe that God also gives some of His power to leaders of the government for ruling the people. The apostle Paul writes even to the people who lived under the corrupt Roman empire:

✘ Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Romans 13:1

Our President, Governors, Mayors, and all whom God has placed over us today are to be respected and honored. They are not perfect, but they exercise God's power in their offices. Since they exercise God's power they are to be obeyed at all times. The only time we do not need to obey them is if they tell us to do something that goes against God's Word. For example if the government told us we could not talk to people about Jesus, we would have to disobey. This is what happened to Peter and John. They were told by the authorities not to preach about Jesus and especially about His death and resurrection. Their answer was:

✘ Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than man!" Acts 5:29

We believe that God also gives some of His power to pastors, Sunday School and Release time teachers and leaders in the church. As they preach and teach for God, we are to respect and obey them for their work's sake.

✘ Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. Hebrews 13:17a

We believe that God wants pupils to respect their teachers. Elisha honored his teacher Elijah. He called him his "father."

We believe that God wants people to honor those for whom they work. Through the apostle Paul God commanded even slaves (employees in our day and age) to be subject to their masters remembering who the real "Boss" is. In honesty we are to do what we are paid to do.

- ⌘ Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. Colossians 3:22-23

And it's not just the nice supervisors that we are to work well for. Even bad bosses are to be honored and obeyed:

- ⌘ Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. I Peter 2:18

It's not all a one way street, we obey no matter what. Rather when God calls us to honor, respect and obey all sorts of authorities He also gives responsibilities to those who are in authority. The government is not just to be obeyed but they are given the task of being punishing those who do wrong and commending those who do right.

- ⌘ Rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Romans 13:3-4

Master's (employers and bosses) are held accountable to God.

- ⌘ Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven. Colossians 4:1

By God's design parents are called to care for the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and especially for the spiritual development of their children.

- ⌘ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Furthermore, we believe God's promise that obedience and respect will bring blessings for this earthly life. In giving the commandment to Moses, God said:

- ⌘ Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. Exodus 20:12

In the New Testament, Paul repeats the commandment and the promise (Ephesians 6:2-3). He reminds us that obedience will bring harmony between parents and children and between authorities and those under them. Disobedience and disrespect bring unhappiness and trouble.

Most of all, we believe that God's spiritual blessings are passed on by parents to their obedient children. Parents are to care for their children's bodily needs. Spiritual care is even more important. To parents God says:

- ✠ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

See how Timothy, Paul's co-worker, was blessed by his mother:

- ✠ I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also... continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 1:5

THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES: I Am to Respect God by My Obedience

It is easier for me to agree with this commandment than to keep it. My pride and desire to have my own way lead me to break it. God wants me to obey this commandment with my parents, my teachers, my pastor, and my government.

I know that God intends to build me up in faith through the guidance of my elders. I must give their work my attention and faithfulness.

I know that God blesses me when I am obedient. When I am rebellious, I bring unhappiness upon myself and others. My flesh is weak. I need God's forgiveness for my breaking of this commandment. I need His help if I am to live as His respectful child.

Prayer Thought—

I pray that I may remember that parents and others in authority are God's representatives. I pray that my life may honor Him in them. I repent of my past sins against this commandment. I ask for wisdom and strength to follow my God's will.

The Fifth Commandment

Must we fear and love God to keep this commandment? Isn't the fear of human punishment enough to keep men from killing? Human laws might be enough to stop many crimes of murder. God, however, is concerned about much more than actual murder.

People who do not fear and love God may think they have kept this commandment if they have not taken another person's life. "Live and let live," they say. Our God says, "Live and help live." He places upon His people the task of actively helping others. Just to let others alone is not enough. Yet, to feel that we must help others is not a natural feeling. Christians, however, live by faith in Christ and have a new way of looking at things. A large part of the Christian life is guided by the Fifth Commandment.

You shall not murder

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God
so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body,
but help and support him in every physical need.

THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: God's People Are Responsible for the Bodily Welfare of Others

We believe that God alone has the right to take human life. He gives life; He takes it when people die. If a court sentences a person to death, it does so as God's representative. As God's representative a government may also send its citizens to war. Government gives its citizens the right of self-defense. We do not have the right to take our own lives (suicide). God's order is clear:

✠ I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, Deuteronomy 32:39

✠ "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind. Genesis 9:6

We believe that deliberately or carelessly hurting one's own or another person's body is forbidden. Joseph's brothers broke this commandment by selling him as a slave. They broke it again when they hurt their father by telling him that Joseph was dead. Our fear and love of God move us not to hurt others or cause them sorrow in any way.

Furthermore, we believe that God does not want us to hate others. Ungodly people may scoff and say, “We may hate others so long as we do not actually hurt them.” The Scriptures say:

- ⌘ Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. I John 3:15

Unbelievers are puzzled when we tell them that we believe that we do not have the right to “get back” at people who hurt us. Love of God moves us to forgive, as we are forgiven. We let God deal with evildoers.

- ⌘ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. Romans 12:19

We believe that each Christian is appointed by God as a caretaker of other people. Our Savior has given us a wonderful example. We remember His kind deeds reported in the gospels:

- ⌘ [Jesus] went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. Acts 10:38

The fear and love of God in our hearts will show itself in our loving concern for others. As if we were agents of God, He instructs us:

- ⌘ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16

Doing good, even to our enemies and without hope of being repaid, is a mark of the Christian, as Jesus said:

- ⌘ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:35-36

The greatest reward of all for helping others is to know that we are doing God’s work. Through His people He sends His loving care to those who need it. Jesus’ words have always excited God’s people:

- ⌘ Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. Matthew 25:40

THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES: I Am Responsible for Doing Good to Others

Certainly I must avoid killing or hating others. Moreover I am to take an active part in making God’s love felt in the lives of other people. I am to look for opportunities to share His love with all whom He places in touch with my life. Calls to give of my money, my time, and my work for people less fortunate than I come to me from God. As His child I will see them as assignments from Him

My sinful nature bids me to say, “Let other people worry about themselves.” But then I remember that my own life has been paid for by the sacrifice of Christ. Indeed, I am not my own. God has made me His own that His goodness toward all men may work through me.

Prayer Thought—

Intercession is the act of praying for the bodily and spiritual needs of others. I am to look for the needs of others and to pray for them. Also, I will need God’s urging to help me go with willing hands to help those for whom I pray.

The Sixth Commandment

A great river is a force for good. Millions of tons of water flow steadily between the banks, bringing power and life to cities and farms. Under control the river is a power for blessing.

In a flood this peaceful river turns into a destroyer, bringing trouble. Out of control the river is a power for misery.

Men have learned how to restrain many such threatening rivers. Dams may be built across them, and levees may be thrown up along their banks. In time of high water they hold the river in check and prevent it from destroying. Under control again, the river is once more a blessing.

In some ways resembling the river there is a power in the body and mind of every human being. This power is called sex. God put it in man as a blessing, but because of sin man misuses this power. And now it may destroy body and soul. Nevertheless, like the river, it can be contained and kept as a force for good. The Holy Spirit protects the blessing of sex in the Sixth Commandment.

You shall not commit adultery

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God

so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life

in what we say and do,

and husband and wife love and honor each other.

THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: God Gives and in Christ controls the Power of Sex

God put the power of sexuality into human beings when He created them. Human sexuality, being male or female, is a good thing, a blessing of God before the fall into sin. Through the gift of sexuality God set in order male and female relationships. Sexual intimacy is designed by God to create very strong attachments between a husband and wife so that they give themselves freely to each other for the rest of their lives, and have children. This is God’s plan that we call marriage and family life. The joining of a man and a woman in

marriage for mutual joy and to have children is not a human invention. It is part of God's wise plan. In God's sight, marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman. God began it with Adam and Eve.

✘ The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Genesis 2:18

Through sin the power of sexuality gets out of control. It drives people to all kinds of evil deeds that upset God's plans for human happiness.

There are many ugly words which refer to the abuse of sexual power. *Sexual immorality* is any use of God's gift of sex outside of a husband and wife relationship. It includes sexual relationships before marriage (which includes living together), prostitution, adultery, homosexuality, orgies, incest, and rape. *Prostitution* is when one of the people is paid to engage in sexual activities. *Adultery* when one or both people engaging in sexual activity are married to someone else. *Homosexual* is when either two men or two woman are engaged in sexual activity. *Orgies* are when three or more people are engaging in sexual activity together. *Incest* is sexual relations between family members, parent/child or siblings. *Rape* is using physical force or drugs to have sexual relations with someone who is unwilling.

Humans sexuality is a power that can be turned into wrong channels by pornography, tv and movies that rarely show God's plan for proper sexual relationships, revealing cloths, books that tell of sexual sins, dirty jokes and dirty talk, sexting and the like. *Pornography* (literally evil writing) is any movies, pictures, magazines, etc., that show (or describe) naked people or sexual relationships in a very open and direct way in order to cause sexual excitement.

Pornography is so very hard to deal with in our day of instant internet access. What used to require somebody stealing dad's "girly magazines" are now available with just one click of a mouse or tap of a finger.

You need to know that pornography is just as addictive as drugs and alcohol. It takes the same addictive path. First a person gets *hooked* with simple pictures or video clips. After a while that isn't enough and they start looking for more (that's called *escalation*). After a while they can become *desensitized* and no amount of pornography can get rid of that sense of wanting more so a person can start acting out their fantasies. In really bad cases a person can be *totally absorbed* with no care for what might happen. It's a real problem. People have lost their families, their jobs and even done jail time because of pornography. And it all starts with just a little hook.

Pornography goes against the Sixth Commandment because it inspires lust. *Lust* is as strong desire for sexual contact. Jesus warns that lusting is already a breaking of this commandment:

✘ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matthew 5:27-28

What God establishes as a good gift to be used within the boundaries of marriage, Satan is going to try to mess it up. Satan is the deceiver. In all sorts of sexual sins he promises pleasure. However, the shattered

families and lives of countless numbers of people reveal the terrible, destructive power of sexual sins. God warns against these sins. He calls us to a pure life.

✘ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Ephesians 5:3

✘ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. I Thessalonians 4:7

We are to be holy in matters of sex; that is, set apart from ungodly abuse of this blessing. But if this power is built into our bodies, how can we control it? Men with good intentions have fallen into sexual sins. We cannot always trust our good intentions.

This is where the third and controlling force must take over. As dams control a river, so Christ in our hearts by faith controls the power of our sexuality.

This involves trust. Trust is relying upon God, who loves us and gave His Son for us. He provides forgiveness. He grants strength to remain pure. We plead for this controlling force as we pray in worship:

✘ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalm 51:10

We need Christ's power at work in our hearts through His Word. Then the power of sex can be controlled. We may use it for the joy of having a home, a husband or wife, and a happy family life. In all this God has first place. He makes families. He blesses His people in their families when our sexuality is used as God intended it to be used.

THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES: Christ Can Keep Me Pure

From the world about me and from thoughts and feelings that come from within me I am tempted to sins of sex. I must be careful what I read and what movies I see. My friends and I must help each other to remain pure in word and deed. Even curiosity can start trouble.

However, I cannot conquer this sin by my own power. I need Christ's help. Since I belong to Him by my baptism, His power is available to me.

Every day, especially in moments of temptation, the Word of God is a strength for me. By God's grace I will remain pure. Then I will be prepared to serve Him also in a happy marriage if that is His eventual will for me. Right now, in my family I can learn and practice how to be a real man or a lovely woman in Christ.

Prayer Thought—

Jesus told His disciples: "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation." My prayer in connection with this commandment should take to God my own special problems and struggles. I ask the Holy Spirit to help me to victory over sins of sex.