

a fight between two persons, one of whom you desire to win, the other to lose. You must sustain the one and withdraw all support from the other. So also between the **spirit and the flesh** there is a continual combat. Now, **if you wish the spirit to win, you must assist it by prayer**, and likewise you must **resist the flesh by such means as fasting; for by fasting the flesh is weakened.**

The **fourth** way is to **keep oneself busy with wholesome occupations**: “Idleness hath taught much evil” [Sir 23:29]. Again: “This was the iniquity of Sodom your sister, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance, and the idleness of her” [Ez 16:49]. St. Jerome says: “Be always busy in doing something good, so that the devil may find you ever occupied.” Now, study of the Scriptures is the best of all occupations, as **St. Jerome tells us: “Love to study the Scriptures and you will not love the vices of the flesh”** [Ad Paulin.].

### SUMMARY OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

These are the ten precepts to which Our Lord referred when He said: “If you would enter into life, keep the commandments” (Mt 19:17). There are two main principles of all the Commandments, namely, love of God and love of neighbor. The man that loves God must necessarily do three things: (1) he must have no other God. And in support of this is the Commandment: “You shall not have strange gods”; (2) he must give God all honor. And so it is commanded: “You shall not take the name of God in vain”; (3) he must freely take his rest in God. Hence: “Remember that you keep holy the Sabbath day.”

But to love God worthily, one must first of all love one’s neighbor. And so: “Honor your father and mother.” Then, one must avoid doing harm to one’s neighbor in act. “You shall not kill” refers to our neighbor’s person; “You shall not commit adultery” refers to the person united in marriage to our neighbor; “You shall not steal” refers to our neighbor’s external goods. We must also avoid injury to our neighbor both by word, “You shall not bear false witness,” and by thought, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods” and “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.”

### THE LAW OF GOD THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

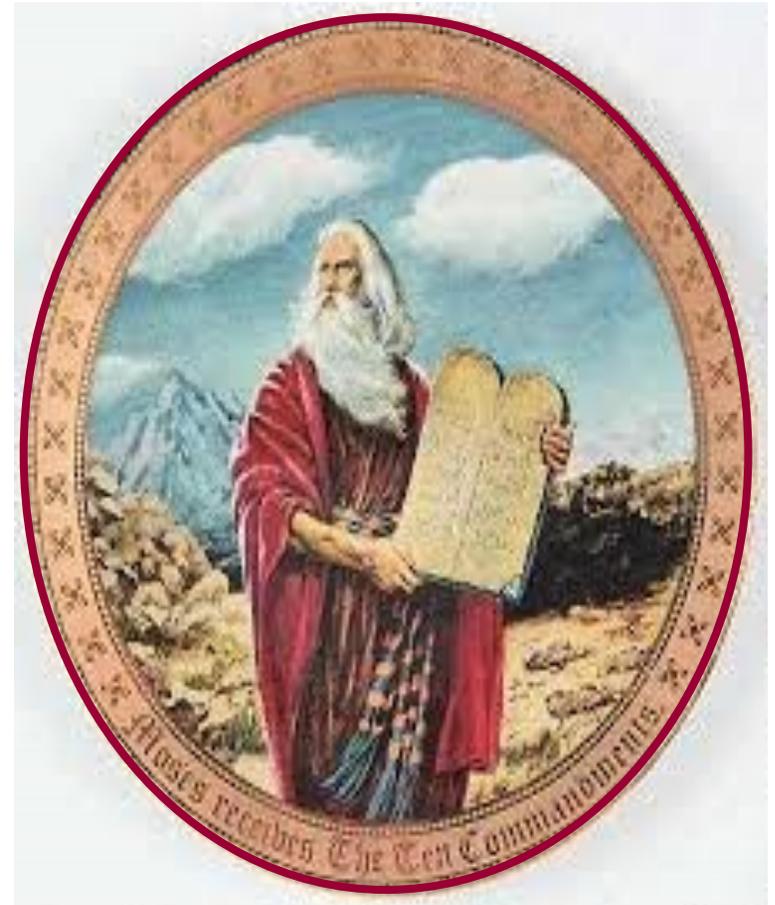


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# The Ten Commandments

## Commandment 10



**THE LAW OF GOD**

The Ten Commandments or Decalogue (10 words) was given by God on Mt. Horeb (also known as Mt. Sinai) to Moses around 1280 BC. They are the core of the moral teachings of Israel and have come down to Christianity as part of Divine Revelation. The Church in commenting on the Commandments sees in them the totality of the negative and positive moral law, the things we should not do, as well as the things we should do. This is to say, they embody the entire natural law, what reason can discover of morality from the nature of the world and man. However, as St. Thomas Aquinas noted, not every society, much less every man, discovers the entire natural law, so God has revealed it in the Commandments so it could be known with certainty by all men, of every society, and every age.

The Bible gives two versions of the Ten Commandments, in essential content identical, one in Exodus and another in Deuteronomy. The enumeration of the commandments (which is number one, which is two etc.) are traditional and neither contained in the texts nor obvious. The Catholic Church has traditionally used the Deuteronomy account and followed the division of the text given in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Scriptures made by second century BC Jews in Egypt and used by the early Church as its Old Testament. The Anglican Church and the Lutheran Church also use this account. The other Reformation churches use the Exodus listing, and adopted the Jewish enumeration of the Hebrew text. The Commandments are probably best known from the traditional formulas used in catechesis.

Commentary is by Saint Thomas Aquinas. By universal consent, Thomas Aquinas is the preeminent spokesman of the Catholic tradition of reason and of divine revelation. He is one of the great teachers of the medieval Catholic Church, honored with the titles Doctor of the Church and Angelic Doctor.

## Commandment 10

### THE TENTH (NINTH) COMMANDMENT You Shall Not Covet your Neighbor's Wife.

St. John says in his first Epistle that "all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" [1 Jn 2:16]. Now, all that is desirable is included in these three, two of which are forbidden by the precept: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house." Here "house," signifying height, refers to avarice, for "glory and wealth shall be in his house" [Ps 111:3]. This means that he who desires the house, desires honors and riches. And thus after the precept forbidding desire for the house of one's neighbor comes the Commandment prohibiting concupiscence of the flesh: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife."

Because of the corruption which resulted from the Fall, none has been free from concupiscence except Christ and the glorious Virgin. And wherever there is concupiscence, there is either venial or mortal sin, provided that it is allowed to dominate the reason. Hence the precept is not, let sin not be; for it is written: "I know

that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" [Rm 7:18].

**First** of all, sin rules in the flesh when, by giving consent to it, **concupiscence reigns in the heart**. And, therefore, St. Paul adds "so as to obey the lusts thereof" to the words: "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body" [Rm 6:12]. Accordingly the Lord says: "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart" [Mt 5:28]. For with God the intention is taken for the act.

**Secondly**, sin rules in the flesh when the concupiscence of our heart is **expressed in words**: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" [Mt 12:34]. And again: "Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth" [Eph 4:29]. Therefore, one is not without sin who composes frivolous songs. Even the philosophers so thought, and poets who wrote amatory verses were sent into exile. Lastly, sin rules in the flesh when at the behest of desire the members are made to serve iniquity: "As you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness to greater and greater iniquity" [Rm 6:19]. These, therefore, are the progressive steps of concupiscence.

### Ways to overcome concupiscence

We must realize that the avoidance of concupiscence demands much labor, for it is based on something within us. It is as hard as trying to capture an enemy in one's own household. However, this desire can be overcome in **four** ways.

**Firstly**, by **fleeing the external occasions such as**, for instance, bad company; and in fact whatever may be an occasion for this sin: "Do not gaze not upon a maiden lest her beauty be a stumbling-block to you... Do not look around you in the ways of the city, nor wander up and down in its streets. Turn away your face from a woman dressed up, and do not gaze upon another's beauty. For many have perished by the beauty of a woman, whereby lust is enkindled as a fire" [Sir 9:5-9]. And again: "Can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn?" [Prov 6:27]. And thus Lot was commanded to flee, "neither stay you in all the country about" [Gen 19:17].

The **second** way is **by not giving an opening to thoughts** which of themselves are the occasion of lustful desires. And this must be done by mortification of the flesh: "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection" [1 Cor 9:27].

The **third** way is **perseverance in prayer**: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it" [Ps 126:1]. And also: "I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it" [Wis 8:21]. Again: "This kind is not cast out save by prayer and fasting" [Mt 17:20]. All this is not unlike to