

Series: "God's Top 10"

For Message: Exodus 20:16; II Samuel 1:20; I Corinthians 13:5b-6; Philippians 4:8

Message Title: "Think About These Things"

Introduction: Good Morning BMZ! I'm so glad you are with us today as we CONTINUE our WORSHIP SERIES called "GOD'S TOP 10"! Over the past number of weeks, we have ATTEMPTED to look at the 10 COMMANDMENTS from a little different ANGLE than maybe we normally do.

"OH, NO ... MORE RULES!!" Well, I hope you will stick around through this series to DISCOVER ONCE AGAIN how MUCH GOD WANTS you and me to have a FULFILLING LIFE HERE and an ETERNITY in PARADISE! Through these COMMANDMENTS of GOD, we are going to DISCOVER some PURPOSE and MEANING to LIFE.

We've had a couple weeks off from GOD'S TOP 10 ... thank you to JOHN and WAYNE for their leadership and messages on FAITH and ENCOURAGEMENT ... so, I thought we would REMEMBER again WHY we are doing this series...

Remember the PSALMIST writing about the INCREDIBLE BEAUTY and MAJESTY of the SKIES and the SUN and the DAY and NIGHT and the HEAVENS ... just LOOK UP!

He then starts writing about GOD'S LAWS and GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS in the SAME WAY that he talked about the HEAVENS... Listen ... Psalm 19:7-8 = ⁷ *The instructions of the Lord are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.* ⁸ *The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight for living.* ¹

Here's what we are FINDING OUT ... We are figuring out through this series that the COMMANDMENTS of GOD are not to RESTRICT US from experiencing WONDERFUL LIFE ... these RULES / COMMANDMENTS actually OPEN UP the POSSIBILITIES of what Jesus called "COMPLETE JOY" or "FULL SATISFACTION" in THIS LIFE! SO...

Is it POSSIBLE that GOD'S LAWS are worth PRAISING?!? Do they BRING JOY?!

If you have your Bible with you, turn with me to EXODUS 20 ... if you don't; no worries. All of our Scriptures for today will be up on the screen and much of what we are doing is in your program. If you don't own a Bible and would like one, please stop by Java Jct/Blessed Bean and someone will get you set up with your own Bible. Speaking of which...

If you haven't already, I invite you to take out your message notes and Connection card... On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will find a brief outline walking us through our Scripture. You will see that there are blanks to fill in ... Please take the time to do so. Grab a pen and write down whatever else you think is important to you and your faith journey. After worship, drop off your CONNECTION CARD and take your notes home and refrigerate them. Please Re-read the Scripture and the notes to keep growing and learning. For those of you watching on-line, hit the button for notes and for CONNECTION CARD and stick with us. If you are watching/listening later, or IPODing; you can download the outline off of our website so you too can take notes.

Let's pray and then we will press on with where we are going today... **LET'S PRAY (turn off marked lights during prayer)!**

You know, probably the GREATEST POWER entrusted to we human beings is the POWER of the human MIND. It's so incredibly WIDE and DEEP and DIVERSE and CREATIVE ... not sure we can imagine the POTENTIAL of the HUMAN MIND.

The 2nd GREATEST POWER we humans have is COMMUNICATION. And, although communication depends on the MIND for its RESOURCES ... STILL, COMMUNICATION still holds CONTROL over the MIND! WHY is that?!? BECAUSE the ONLY WAY a MIND can SHARE its RESOURCES is through COMMUNICATION!

I'm not sure if you've heard this PHRASE, but it is one of the phrases we use to EXPLAIN all that goes wrong ... "A BREAKDOWN in COMMUNICATION". Unfortunately, that phrase is NOT an EXCUSE for something going wrong. It's USUALLY TRUE! How many times have YOU REALIZED that if the COMMUNICATION had been BETTER, things might NOT have GONE WRONG!

Well, if COMMUNICATION is that POWERFUL ... and if EVERY HUMAN BEING has ACCESS to COMMUNICATION (even babies); we NEED the 9th COMMANDMENT ... it PROTECTS the INTEGRITY and the WORTH of the POWER of COMMUNICATION!

So, here it is ... the 9th Commandment = Exodus 20:16 = ¹⁶ *"You must not testify falsely against your neighbor."* ² Other versions say that you "SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS".

The idea of a WITNESS takes us to a COURTROOM, where TRUTH can be a matter of LIFE and DEATH! BUT, the JEWISH people understood that this commandment applied to ALL of human relationships and covered ALL forms of SLANDER, GOSSIP, LYING and MISREPRESENTATION of any sort!

Another version of the Bible (Contemporary English Version) translates this commandment as, *"You shall NOT tell LIES about others."*

That makes sense ... The TRUTH is that ALL of the world is a COURTROOM! Everywhere and ALWAYS, human REPUTATIONS are on TRIAL by PEOPLE NEAR and FAR. We are declared INNOCENT or GUILTY at the Grocery Store, the Bar, in the halls at School, in TEXTS, on the phone during a GOSSIP SESSION, in EMAIL, on FACEBOOK and other Social Media ... heck, right after WORSHIP in THIS ROOM! Human Reputations are ON TRIAL CONSTANTLY!

I. You Shall Know the Truth

And, if TRUTH is SO IMPORTANT in a COURT of LAW ... important enough to take an OATH ... wouldn't the TRUTH be even MORE IMPORTANT in the COURTROOM of LIFE?!

Hear me ... I know this is really philosophical stuff, but I think we need to KNOW IT if we are going to FOLLOW JESUS WELL ... When people stand before a JUDGE, they realize that they need to be CAREFUL that what they say is TRUTH. BUT, in everyday life, where there are NO OATHS; EASY and THOUGHTLESS SPEECH is PRACTICALLY ENCOURAGED!

In a COURTROOM, the person on trial has an opportunity to HEAR the CHARGES made against them. In EVERYDAY LIFE, we SELDOM KNOW the STORIES that are being TOLD about us. We don't know the JUDGMENTS that are being passed on us. AND, we rarely have a chance to SET the RECORD STRAIGHT!

In the REAL WORLD, when it comes to the POWER of COMMUNICATION there is NO PROTECTION from an OATH. There is NO PROTECTION from the LAW. The ONLY PROTECTION we have for our REPUTATION and PERSONAL SECURITY is the 9th COMMANDMENT ... DO NOT TESTIFY FALSELY AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR!

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ex 20:16). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

²

Listen, I don't think that there is a SIN MORE POPULAR across the PLANET as the SIN of FALSE WITNESS / SLANDER / TEARING APART the REPUTATION ... of OTHER PEOPLE! WHY?? Partly because EVERY HUMAN BEING has ACCESS to the WEAPON...

Now, most of us would NOT HURT another person with a REAL WEAPON, but FEW people THINK TWICE about REPEATING an UNVERIFIED STORY ... nor do we take time to THINK THROUGH if it might HURT / HARM / KILL another person's REPUTATION!

Please let me confess before I go on ... I'm EMBARRASSED when I think about how many times I've listened in on destructive words about other people. I'm EMBARRASSED that I have NOT asked the person talking if they can PROVE the STORY is TRUE! I'm EMBARRASSED that there are times I'm secretly GLAD when I hear DESTRUCTIVE words. I'm EMBARRASSED that I've said, "I'm not sure if this is true, BUT..." KNOWING that ALL of the words BEFORE 'BUT' will be IGNORED.

MY CONSCIENCE is SENSITIVE enough to REALIZE that I've probably HURT other people's REPUTATIONS when I get caught up in the MOMENT! Is YOURS?!?

I NEED the 9th COMMANDMENT!! DO YOU?!?

II. False Witness

So, what does FALSE WITNESS MEAN?! Actually, the two accounts of the 10 Commandments in Hebrew use DIFFERENT WORDS to describe "False Witness". In Exodus, the Hebrew word means: "LYING" or "UNTRUE". In Deuteronomy, the Hebrew word means: "INSINCERE", "EMPTY" and/or "FRIVOLOUS". STOP!

Think about that ... sometimes FALSE WITNESS is NOT a LIE ... it's just a FRIVOLOUS, THOUGHTLESS WORD! We hear something and we PASS it ON ... we don't intend to be harmful ... BUT, it can do GREAT HARM!!

Think about how FAST people MAKE JUDGMENTS about other PEOPLE—People they DON'T EVEN KNOW! BUT, they heard something in our "SOUND BITE" Generation and they JUDGE that PERSON BASED ON some THIRD-PARTY MISINTERPRETATION of the TRUTH ... FALSE WITNESS!

Now, FALSE WITNESS comes in MANY different FORMS ... feel free to COMPILE your OWN LIST, but here is a couple that I was READING ABOUT...

A. Inappropriate Silence

Most of us know this one, but it's worth repeating ... INAPPROPRIATE SILENCE. The Jewish Law condemned, not only the person giving false witness, but also those who had evidence and didn't give it!

If I stay SILENT when I KNOW the TRUTH or have REASON to QUESTION the VALIDITY of what is being SAID while another person's REPUTATION is being RUINED, I am PARTY to the SLANDER and DESTRUCTION of that PERSON! Silence is GOLDEN at times ... and other times SILENCE is CRIMINAL!

B. Inappropriate Questions

Have you ever been around someone who QUESTIONS EVERYTHING? There are times when QUESTIONING is INAPPROPRIATE! Questioning is a SNEAKY TACTIC that people use when they want to HURT SOMEONE ELSE. Someone states that another person is GOOD and KIND and LOVING... Often there is another who QUESTIONS IT ... "Are you sure they are that good or is that just a SHOW?!?"

Heck, SATAN used this TACTIC with EVE in the GARDEN ... Genesis 3:1b = *One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the*

garden?”³ Be careful QUESTIONING and be careful around OTHERS who QUESTION in this way!

C. Inappropriate Intentions

Then, there are those with INAPPROPRIATE INTENTIONS. There is nothing worse than the person who INTENTIONALLY sets out to DESTROY another person. Sometimes it’s a matter of REVENGE and PAYBACK is coming! BUT, MOST of the TIME, it’s about JEALOUSY!

People tend to RESENT another person’s SUCCESS and they think it’s their JOB to CUT the other person DOWN to SIZE! Which is telling of the CUTTER-DOWNER ... they are admitting that they PERCEIVE that person as BIGGER than they are and they need to REDUCE them to a size that they can COPE WITH!

I wonder how often a person bears FALSE WITNESS against another SIMPLY BECAUSE they are UNHAPPY with WHO THEY ARE?! We all know someone who is an EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CUTTER-DOWNER! They will cut down ANYONE around them ... it’s NOT PERSONAL ... it’s UNIVERSAL! WHY?!? Because that person is CRYING OUT that they are UNHAPPY with THEMSELVES!

SIDE NOTE – “HURT PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE!” We need to take that into account when we are on the RECEIVING END of CRITICISM as well. You’ve heard about PRAYING for our ENEMIES??

III. What Harm is Done?

Remember that story about Woodrow Wilson from a few weeks ago? The PRESIDENT who thought it was possible to have WORLD PEACE through his LEAGUE of NATIONS (now known as “”) ... Remember that he had people in the U.S. who disagreed with him, but went beyond just attacking Wilson’s POLICIES and they attacked him PERSONALLY?!? Remember he DIED before he had been out of office 3 YEARS?!? WORDS are POWERFUL!

When we are on the RECEIVING END of FALSE WITNESS, we feel HELPLESS! No matter how hard you try, you CANNOT ANSWER ALL of the LIES! You CANNOT CHANGE the NEWLY FORMED MISPERCEPTIONS of OTHER PEOPLE! You CANNOT REBUILD your REPUTATION...

SLANDER is one of the MOST TRAGIC of HUMAN practices because it know NO BOUNDARIES. Our Human relationships depend on TRUST and when people CHOOSE to DECEIVE with their WORDS; we LOSE ... well, kind of, our HUMANNESS! We lose what helps us as people TICK! If we cannot TRUST each other ... HONESTLY, what do we HAVE?

Have you ever wondered, when a FRIEND has spoken NEGATIVELY about another FRIEND ... what they might be saying BEHIND YOUR BACK?! How do you TRUST THEM?

Whether it’s in our PERSONAL LIVES or the LIFE of the CHURCH or in BUSINESS, we want to KNOW that we can TRUST the next person... LONELINESS (which is a VERY REAL PAIN) comes from NOT being able to TRUST OTHERS.

I want to GO TOWARD “False Witness” in the BODY of CHRIST for a minute. Think about this ... because this would fall under “FALSE WITNESS”. Have you ever said anything NEGATIVE about OUR CHURCH? Have you ever said anything NEGATIVE about the PROGRAMS of OUR CHURCH? Have you ever said anything NEGATIVE about the LEADERSHIP of OUR CHURCH?!?

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ge 3:1). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

And, it really DOES NOT MATTER WHO you said it to ... “Well, it was just in our small group meeting and that’s all people from our church...”

It doesn’t matter WHO you said it to! BECAUSE, if you are SPEAKING NEGATIVE about OUR CHURCH, please understand that you are DISCOURAGING SOMEONE from TRUSTING OUR CHURCH / our PROGRAMS / our LEADERSHIP, etc.

And, IF you are DISCOURAGING PEOPLE from TRUSTING our CHURCH, you are DISCOURAGING THEM from ATTENDING and GETTING INVOLVED in our CHURCH.

Now, you all understand that the WORD of GOD will be PREACHED here EVERY SUNDAY, right?!? I hope so...

Let me CONNECT the DOTS for you ... if you are SPEAKING NEGATIVELY about BMZ CHURCH, you are PERSONALLY DISCOURAGING people from HEARING the WORD of GOD! Now, let me say this as DIRECTLY and SUCCINCTLY as I can ... IF YOU ARE DISCOURAGING PEOPLE FROM HEARING THE WORD OF GOD, JESUS IS NO LONGER LORD FOR YOU ... BECAUSE YOU ARE FIGHTING AGAINST THE KINGDOM OF GOD ... GUESS WHO’S ARMY YOU JOINED?!? You are now serving SATAN and you will ANSWER for that some day!!

Is TESTIFYING FALSELY HARMFUL?!? I’d say so...

Maybe we should apply this NEXT PART to how we TALK about the CHURCH TOO!

IV. What if the Gossip is True?

Let’s keep this simple. If you know information that is TRUE and you are considering passing it on to other people, please take a moment and ask yourself TWO QUESTIONS: 1) Is it my place to tell (aka “Is this any of my business?”)?? 2) Will my sharing this information BUILD UP or TEAR DOWN ... Body of Christ, an individual, etc.?

Please take into consideration the person or persons you are sharing information with. You know WHO WILL pass that on as “INFORMATION IS AMMUNITION” and those that will go to their CLOSET and PRAY for the people involved.

Here’s the DEAL ... if you pass on INFORMATION (TRUE or UNTRUE), you are then RESPONSIBLE for ALL of the RIPPLE EFFECT of that INFORMATION. They will talk to TWO PEOPLE and they will talk to TWO PEOPLE and they will talk to TWO PEOPLE, etc. You are then responsible for HUNDREDS of PEOPLE HAVING that INFORMATION...

Again, please ask yourself TWO QUESTIONS: 1) Is it my place to tell (aka “Is this any of my business?”)?? 2) Will my sharing this information BUILD UP or TEAR DOWN ... Body of Christ/CHURCH, an individual, an organization, etc.?

I take a que from DAVID. Remember that he had been anointed as the next KING of ISRAEL and that SAUL was out to KILL DAVID! Those were FACTS!

Then, SAUL was KILLED on the BATTLEFIELD in a NOT-SO-GREAT FASHION. And, DAVID had EVERY RIGHT to make sure people KNEW what a BAD PERSON SAUL WAS, BUT, David refused to GOSSIP ... even when the NEWS was TRUE! II Samuel 1:20 = ²⁰ *Don’t announce the news in Gath, don’t proclaim it in the streets of Ashkelon, or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice and the pagans will laugh in triumph.*⁴

Remember that what we are GOING FOR HERE is to be DEVELOPING FOLLOWERS of JESUS CHRIST, RIGHT?!? Paul described what he SAW in JESUS in the 13th Chapter of his 1st Letter to the Corinthians. We call it the LOVE CHAPTER. Paul would have called it the “JESUS CHAPTER” ... he was describing the CHARACTER TRAITS of JESUS. Here’s what he writes ... I Corinthians 13:5b = *and it keeps no record of being wronged.*

⁴ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (2 Sa 1:20). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

IOW – We don't keep TRACK of when we have BEEN OFFENDED and try to get SOMEONE BACK! Paul goes on ... I Corinthians 13:6 = ⁶ *It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.*⁵

When we are LIKE JESUS, whether it is TRUTH or NOT doesn't matter! What matters is the PERSON ... the PERSON that is CREATED in GOD'S IMAGE and we are called to LOVE enough to INVITE to get to KNOW JESUS!!

Paul understood that it is easy to get CAUGHT UP in all the NEGATIVE TALK in this world (people were people 2000 years ago), so he ENCOURAGED people to be more like JESUS ... be POSITIVE!

Do you remember how JESUS handled GOSSIP?!? In John 8 (read it ... TRUTH, etc.) there is a GREAT STORY about the PHARISEES and RELIGIONS LEADERS bringing a WOMAN to JESUS as he taught in the TEMPLE who had been CAUGHT in the ACT of ADULTERY! They had WITNESSES and they had FACTS and they KNEW that the LAW of Moses said that she should be STONED!

Jesus response? Remember it? He stood up and said, "Let the one who has NOT SINNED throw the first stone!" Then, he stooped down and started writing in the dirt. They all left! John 8:10-11 = ¹⁰ *Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?"* ¹¹ *"No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."*⁶ How can you use that story to HANDLE the GOSSIP that WILL come flowing across YOUR LIFE?!?

Paul wrote this to the Philippians ... and it is our MEMORY VERSE (Next Steps ... Connection Card) ... Philippians 4:8 = ⁸ *And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*⁷

Paul invites us NOT to WALLER in the MUCK of the NEGATIVE, but STAY ABOVE IT and FOCUS on the GOOD ... STAY POSITIVE ... it is CHRIST-LIKE!

Do you know what is TRUE and HONORABLE and RIGHT and PURE and LOVELY and ADMIRABLE and is EXCELLENT and WORTHY OF PRAISE ... and is TRUE?!?

NOT TESTIFYING FALSELY AGAINST OTHER PEOPLE!

V. **The Truth Will Set Us Free**

And the TRUTH will SET us FREE!! Again, these COMMANDMENTS are not meant to LIMIT US ... they are meant to FREE US to be WHO GOD WANTS us to BE and they are MEANT to FREE US to be BLESSED the way GOD wants to BLESS US!

NEXT SUNDAY: We are going to GET our EYES TESTED so that we can EXPERIENCE what JESUS said He CAME FOR ... that our JOY would be FULL ... that LIFE would be FULLY SATISFYING!

Next Steps: *I will memorize Philippians 4:8*
Start a Bible Reading Program
I will pay attention to what I say and don't say this week
I will take the 4 Month Tithe Challenge (through November)
Sign up for Automated Giving

"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."

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⁵ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Co 13:6). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
⁶ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Jn 8:10-11). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
⁷ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Php 4:8). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.