

from Small Catechism of Martin Luther

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things.

The Second Commandment

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God's name, but instead use that very name in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God.

The Third Commandment

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching or God's word, but instead keep that word holy and gladly hear and learn it.

The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and your mother.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we neither despise nor anger our parents and others in authority, but instead honor, serve, obey, love, and respect them.

The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs.

The Sixth Commandment

You shall not commit adultery.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we lead pure and decent lives in word and deed, and each of us loves and honors his or her spouse.

The Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we neither take our neighbors' money or property nor acquire them by using shoddy merchandise or crooked deals, but instead help them to improve and protect their property and income.

The Eighth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.

The Ninth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not try to trick our neighbors out of their inheritance or property or try to get it for ourselves by claiming to have a legal right to it and the like, but instead be of help and service to them in keeping what is theirs.

The Tenth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not entice, force, or steal away from our neighbors their spouses, household workers, or livestock, but instead urge them to stay and fulfill their responsibilities to our neighbors.

What then does God say about all these commandments?

God says the following: “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

What is this? or What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore we are to fear his wrath and not disobey these commandments. However, God promises grace and every good thing to all those who keep these commandments. Therefore we also are to love and trust him and gladly act according to his commands.

Note – in the Bible the Commandments are found in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21.