

Living Inside the Box- A Study of the Ten Commandments

Text: Exodus 20

I believe that Bible studies on this topic would be very helpful because of the questions raised such as, how do these regulations harmonize with the teaching of grace? Today the Big Ten Words receive bad press. They are viewed with negativity by a large part of the American society. Efforts are made to remove them from civic buildings and schools. Paul spoke of the law as holy, righteous and good. (Romans 7:12. But he wrote to the believers in Galatia that since faith (Jesus) has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. Galatians 3:25 so was he contradicting himself? There is great good for the follower of Christ to meditate on the Ten Commandments. With careful observation one will begin to see them not merely as restrictions, but as path ways to freedom from the Father for His beloved children.

In the past years we have been counseled to "think outside the box." There is much to be said for that mindset. When John Foster Dulles was the Secretary of State, I was a high school senior. He said, The Japanese don make anything the people of the United States would want. Well, when I walk through the parking lots of churches and shopping centers, I know he over spoke. The parking spaces are filled with Toyotas, Nissans, Mazdas and Mitsubishi's, etc. They are often described as automobile factories that thought outside the box of traditional ways to build cars. I deeply believe that creativity and imagination are vital to leadership and progress. We are now in the commuter, Twitter, Face Book, iPhone generation. Not many want to return to the typewriter or fountain pen method?

Yet "inside the box" thinking has its limitations, especially in the sports world. There are base lines, strike zones, boundaries, team limits and voluminous rules followed in all the recognized sports. Without rules and regulations chaos would rule in the sport's world.

I will be renewing my driver's license in a few days. The handbook for preparation of the exam contains eighty-six pages. After raising three children, I am convinced parents need to set some ground rules for their children. They ought to place limits upon their habits and activities are for their welfare. There are fences for protection from evil and destructive forces. They should come from hearts that are concerned for the child's emotional, social, physical and financial welfare.

[For the communicator] The previous introduction can be fashioned by you so that the listener will begin to understand that the Commandments have the Father's concern for His children. Now I offer three rationales for delighting in the first of the commandments. Read Exodus 20:1-3

- To worship the One True God frees us from confusion. [You will benefit others by designing your major points into full sentences instead of short phrases. The listener might remember the phrase but not the meaning of the phrase.] The Hebrew nation was an infant when she came out of Egypt. The land from which they will leave and Canaan the land to which they are going, had wholesale polytheism. [The communicator will do well to study the religions of that day in order to show the level of confusion over which god to serve and how many one should worship.] The history of humanity has created a mall of gods. Read Acts 17:16, 22. At this point I shared my experience in Thailand where there were many prayer temples in yards, in front of stores and factories. The modern trinity

of gods may not be as obvious as those, but we do worship at the thrones of position, of power, and of possessions.

- To worship the One True God positions us to receive help. Exodus 20:2 The ancient prophets sarcastically chided the people when they influenced by rival gods. Read Isaiah 44:9- 20; Is it good for firewood or is it divine? We need a God who hears, feels, responds, cares and can help.
- To worship the One True God allows us to focus our love. Read Deuteronomy 6:4 and Exodus 20: 5. Reflect on how God is jealous. That jealousy is not based on His immaturity, arrogance, insecurity, but a deep passion for His children to recognize and appreciate the source of their gifts. What kind of a husband is he who says to his wife, I don't care if you hang out with other men. The book of Hosea gives quite an analogy of the deep affection of God for His people and a desire that they respond appropriately.

Conclusion: When I was a boy I lived in a small town named Ardmore, Oklahoma. It was near land owned by Gene Autry. He wrote and sung a number of popular songs. One was, "Rudolf, the Red Nose Reindeer." But another famous one was "Don't Fence Me In." He liked the wide open spaces. Our fallen nature is inclined to say, no to the Father's rules. We are prone to say, I don't want any restrictions or limits. But when we face the Commandments we are apt to see how we have broken holy law and that only by the mercy of God can we be forgiven. That mercy comes through the person and work of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus accepted the punishment due us so that we could be pardoned from our transgression. When we respond to the invitation to acknowledge Him and follow Him we will find that His commandments are not burdensome. Instead your statutes are my delight. They are my counselors.