

WEEKLY REFLECTION

The Decalogue—another name for the ten commandments—is likely one of the most well-known but also most misunderstood aspects of the Christian faith. Many young people assume on the basis of the Decalogue that Christianity as a religion can be broken down into sheer rules and regulations.

While it is true that the Decalogue functioned as a contractual covenant between God and the Israelites, Christianity is so much more than that. We as the followers of Jesus do God a disservice when we break it down to rules and regulations, to what is forbidden and what we can get away with. This makes our faith all about sin management, when in reality God is all about true heart and life transformation.

Some highlights of the richness and vastness to God's heart behind the Decalogue: these were principles designed to help the Israelites thrive. The Hebrew people had just been liberated from slavery in Egypt, where their daily routine was to eat, work, sleep, and repeat. The way that the commandments are ordered, it's almost as if God is teaching them to first sort out their relationship with Him and with themselves (no. 1-4), and then setting in place some rules for them to live with each other in harmony (no. 5-10).

We have this idea as well that the Decalogue is intended for us to "gain God's favor". We must obey all the rules, or the consequences will be severe. There are incentives that God puts into place to help the Israelites be motivated to obey Him, but He was never interested in mere obedience in the first place. He gave to the Hebrews grace, mercy, and loving kindness when He set them free from Egypt, way before He established the Decalogue—and in Jesus Christ we find our saving grace today, as He died on the cross to forgive all our sins.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

If you got to be King / Queen of the World for a day, which one rule would you establish? Share one silly rule that is completely for your own delight and pleasure (be creative!), and one serious rule if you have something on your heart to address.

QUESTION TWO:

Go through the passage of Exodus 20:1-18, and split up into groups to tackle all of the commandments. Summarize them in your own words and think of modern-day applications. Think too of the possible reasons behind God's heart for setting such rules with the Israelites.

QUESTION THREE:

Jesus summarizes the ten commandments thusly: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"; and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mk. 12:30-31)

In Romans 13:10, the apostle Paul writes that "love is the fulfillment of the law."

How might love fulfil the Deacalogue, and how can you enact the fulfillment of the Decalogue with and through love yourself?

As you end, pray into God's heart behind the ten commandments, and thank Him for the richness of His mercy and grace that makes all this possible.