

# (Basics) 16. Keeping the Tenth Commandment

by Zac Poonen

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of honesty in acknowledging sin as the first step to true spirituality and experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.*

**Duration:** 13:08

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:17, Matthew 6:33, Romans 7:7-8, Romans 8:2, Philippians 3:6, Hebrews 8:7

**Topics:** "Inner Purity", "Spiritual Honesty"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker explores the difference between being religious and being spiritual. They emphasize the importance of honesty as the first step towards true spirituality. The speaker highlights that God gave the Ten Commandments not because they could make people spiritual, but to expose sin and test humanity's response. They explain that external righteousness is not enough, and God desires inner purity of motive. The speaker encourages listeners to be honest about their sin and seek forgiveness and cleansing through the power of the Holy Spirit.

---

## Transcript

And we want to continue, in this program, looking at the difference between being religious and being spiritual, as we did in our last three programs. Look at it in a little more depth, so that we can be clear in our own minds on this very important matter. Many of us are familiar, most of us I think, with the Ten Commandments that God gave Moses.

You may not know all of them, but it's good to know them. But I want to point out something to you in those Ten Commandments, which you may not have noticed up until now. And as we understand that, we will see a little bit of the reason why God gave the law, even though He knew that the law could never lead anyone to becoming spiritual or to live a godly life.

In fact, in Hebrews chapter eight, if you read that chapter, you will see very clearly that the old covenant was faulty. That's the word used in Hebrews eight, the old covenant, the law was faulty. Did God give something faulty? Did He make a mistake? He certainly didn't.

He knows the end from the beginning. He gave it with a purpose, for our help, for us to see our need. The law was given to expose sin.

And we could also say the law was given for God to test man, to see how many people would be satisfied with an external righteousness that brought the honor of men. And how many would seek God for that inner purity which alone pleases God. You remember when Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees, He told them, you are people who just clean the outside of the cup, but God sees your hearts.

And He wants the inside of the cup clean. You are people who do all the right things externally so that people are impressed. But God sees deep within, and He's looking for inner purity of motive.

We can say that the Pharisees were like Adam, covered with figures, and there's a curse upon it. And that's why you find that Jesus was in constant conflict with the Pharisees. Think about that.

The Pharisees who kept the letter of the law down to the last detail, whose doctrines were so correct, that we read in Matthew 23, verses 2 and 3, that Jesus told even His disciples to follow the teaching of the Pharisees. Have you noticed that? In Matthew 23, verses 2 and 3, Jesus told His disciples to follow the teaching of the Pharisees. He said, because whatever they say is right.

The only thing He said is, don't do like they do. Don't follow their example in your life, because they teach things and they don't practice them. So there was nothing wrong with the doctrine of the Pharisees.

There was another group in Jesus' time who were called the Sadducees. They had wrong doctrines. And Jesus never told His disciples to follow their teaching, because they didn't believe in angels or spirits or in a resurrection.

In fact, they were very earthly minded. They didn't think much about a future life at all. Their doctrines were wrong, but not the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were people whose doctrines were right. A person can have all his doctrines right, his doctrines may be thoroughly evangelical, and yet he may be religious. He may be only having that which is external.

Think of the Ten Commandments. God said you shouldn't have any other gods. You mustn't make idols.

You must not take My name in vain. You must keep the Sabbath day holy. You must honor your father and mother.

You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal.

You must not bear false witness. Now these are nine of the Ten Commandments. And it's possible for any person, without the help of the Holy Spirit, to keep those nine commandments.

And the proof of it is, many, many people in the Old Testament kept those nine commandments without the help of the Holy Spirit. They did not have the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times. And yet Paul could say in Acts 23, verse 1, I have lived in a good conscience before God from my childhood up until this day.

The rich young ruler, when Jesus pointed out these commandments to him, he said, I've kept all these things from my childhood. It was possible for a God-fearing person to keep all these commandments without the help of the Holy Spirit, just by his own strength. It's possible for any man of any religion to keep these nine commandments without any help from God.

Because man has a certain strength to lead an externally moral life. And if you don't lead an externally moral life, nobody's going to accept your religion. People expect religious people at least to be moral externally.

But when it came to the tenth commandment, the tenth commandment did not deal with externals. It dealt with something inward. The commandment was, you shall not lust or covet or strongly desire.

All these three words mean the same. Unfortunately, lust has got an evil connotation in people's minds, but all it means is a strong desire. Like it says in Galatians 5.17, the Holy Spirit lusts against the flesh.

What does that mean? The Holy Spirit doesn't do any evil. He has got a strong desire against the flesh. And the flesh has got a strong desire against the Holy Spirit.

It's the same word used in Exodus 20, verse 17, the tenth commandment, you shall not covet your neighbor's house or your neighbor's wife, which means the same as you shall not lust for your neighbor's house or lust for your neighbor's wife. Or which means the same as you shall not have a strong desire for your neighbor's house and you shall not have a strong desire for your neighbor's wife. Or you shall not have a strong desire to get your neighbor's servant and wish that that servant who works in your neighbor's house could be your servant because maybe she's such a faithful servant.

You shall not desire your neighbor's business or his donkey or anything that is your neighbor's. The tenth commandment was inward. And there was no way by which anybody could find out whether you had kept it or not.

It was impossible. Now, Paul was a person who was very, very honest. And he tells us in Philippians, in chapter three, that according to the righteousness which is in the law, Philippians 3, verse 6, he was blameless.

He had kept the law blamelessly. What does it mean? Does it mean he kept all ten commandments? He certainly didn't. He kept only nine.

But that's all that was required. Nobody could keep the ten commandments. Nobody could say, I have never lusted after anything.

I've never lusted after my neighbor's wife or my neighbor's daughter. And remember, every woman in the world is either your neighbor's wife or your neighbor's daughter. Everyone in the world.

And you've never desired what belongs to somebody else. There's not a soul in the world who can say that, not even the Apostle Paul. And he tells us that very honestly in Romans, chapter seven, when he says, What shall we say then? Is the law sin? May it never be.

He says, I would not have known sin except for the law. And then he mentions the tenth commandment, not the first nine, because he kept the first nine. He says, when it came to the tenth commandment, Romans 7, 7, which said, You shall not covet or you shall not lust.

You shall not have a strong desire for anything that's your neighbor's. He says, I discovered, verse eight, every type of lusting in my heart. He was honest.

And I thought I was pleasing to God till this commandment showed me the corruption of sin in my life. And I saw I was dead spiritually in God's eyes. Because I found every kind of lusting, he says in verse eight,

every kind of coveting, every kind of strong desire.

Why did God give such a commandment if he knew that nobody could keep it without the help of the Holy Spirit? Now, here's the answer. God gave it to see how many people would be honest in admitting that they had come short. In this area.

Do you know, friends, that the first step to being spiritual is honesty? God doesn't ask you to be holy first. None of us can be holy like him. He doesn't ask us even to be loving or humble or anything, because all these things take time.

But there's one thing you can be today. And that's the first step to true spirituality. And that is honest.

Paul was honest. He said, it's true. I find every type of coveting in my heart.

I'm a sinner. And he says, such a sinner that I thought I was alive. I'm actually dead.

I'm dead in sin. A man who kept every single external commandment acknowledges that he's thoroughly dead in sin because he discovered every type of lusting in his heart. How do you find it in your heart? You just got to be honest.

And if you're honest, God will lead you further. And if you're dishonest and you pretend that you don't have any such desires and you're sort of clean and upright, like the Pharisees pretended, then Jesus will say to you sarcastically, like he said to the Pharisees, I did not come for you righteous people. I came for the sinners.

I came to call sinners to repentance, and he will pass by you altogether and you'll miss the Lord completely, like the Pharisees missed him. Why did they miss the Lord? Why did the Lord leave them alone? He says, you people are healthy. He says, I came for sick people.

Only sick people need a doctor. Why do you healthy people need me? Do you think they were healthy? Far from it. Those Pharisees were the sickest people in Israel.

Why did Jesus say you people are healthy? He was being sarcastic. He was trying to show them their hypocrisy. And he was showing them that he would not go to help those who are not honest.

Do you see how easy it is to come to the Lord? You just got to be honest about the sin in your heart and say, Lord, there's every type of lusting. And because Paul was honest, you know what happened? He discovered how the Holy Spirit's power could help him keep even the 10th commandment, how the Holy Spirit's power could deliver him from lusting within his heart. The blood of Jesus would cleanse his past failure and the Holy Spirit's power would set him free.

He says in Romans 8 2, the law of the spirit has set me free from the law of sin and death. Do you want that experience? Do you want to come into a life where the law of the spirit sets you free from this slavery to lust in your heart? Be honest. Tell the Lord that you've come short, that you've failed, that you've sinned in your heart.

Ask him to forgive you and cleanse you in his blood and say, Lord, I never want to be dishonest again. Ask him to fill you with his Holy Spirit and give you power within and you can be pure.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/8/SID8126.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/basics-16-keeping-the-tenth-commandment/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**