

How do these commandments relate to the Greatest Commandment?

First Commandment

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.

By it we understand God as One, Unity inseparable, unfragmented, single, without division. As such, No other gods are possible.

What has power or authority over our thoughts and actions?

What or who is the most frequent or intense object of our desires and our intentions or our will?

To what or whom do we honor with the assent of our deepest inner being?

Second Commandment

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

By it we understand that all our thoughts about God are completely inadequate. No image can begin to do justice to His infinite beauty, perfection, depth, holiness, purity, compassion, kindness, glory.

To force what is sacred into the profane, to concoct Emmanuel, we imagine and craft his image. Yet a god who can be crafted, a god who can be circumscribed by time, is but a shadow of our humanity.

Though God necessitates that we learn about him through parables, comparisons, abstract descriptors, and the wise words of teachers, we must realize that these are only pointers. Until silence quiets the stream of verbal consciousness, the valves of our attention fully open and all the descriptors become one translucent goodness we cannot know Him. Only our sense of His love remains, and when that too becomes inadequate, can we in our emptiness, insufficiency and simplicity let childlike trust have the last say?

"Little children," writes John "keep yourselves from idols."

The Third Commandment

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

By it we understand the third commandment calls for a respect for the identity of God, the personhood of God.

The name given to Moses hides as much as it reveals. YHWH, the ultimate timeless and infinite being. Reality itself, but made personal with a name. The Creator of all languages pushes the limits of language and grammar to give us a single word to describe who he is. In the four Hebrew letters, yod, heh, vav, heh interpreters see the verb "to be" and the first person pronoun and arrive at a possible meaning. "I am that I am." Then they struggle to make sense of what is beyond human rationality. Pure being, timeless existence, infinite creative capacity.

Pondering the name, Yahweh, we begin to realize that our identity is completely enclosed in the Creator's identity. "In Him we live and move and have our being."

In the Lord's prayer Jesus expresses what is part of a long Jewish tradition- "*kiddush Ha-Shem*," - teaching his disciples to pray that The Name be kept holy. Hallowed be thy name. This respect for God's name is part of our life-long search to know Him fully.

Fourth Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

“There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord. Life goes wrong when the control of space, the acquisition of things of space, becomes our sole concern” (A. Heschel, *The Sabbath*)

“Gallantly, ceaselessly, quietly, man must fight for inner liberty to remain free of the enslavement of the material world. Inner liberty depends upon being exempt from domination of things as well as from domination of people. There are many who have acquired ... political liberty, but only very few are not enslaved to things. This is our constant problem—how to live with people and remain free, how to live with things and remain free.” Remaining free in this sense is Sabbath. (A Heschel, *The Sabbath*)

“The Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.” -- “One greater than the Sabbath is here.”

The Sabbath provides us a stopping place in the endless struggle for survival. But the stopping place is also a starting place. A new beginning. Perhaps this is why Jesus rose on Sunday to show us Sabbath as a revival, an opportunity to let the stress go, an awakening, a revivification. The Lord of the Sabbath gives this rest as a gift to all the earth saying -- without me your work will never reveal my glory, but work to enter into my rest and you will see my glory.

Now we will attempt to do what the scriptures tell us to do. Ponder, reflect, remember, meditate, contemplate the commandments of God until their goodness becomes our goodness. Better yet we will become more fully aware of the mind of the Christ who is in us by His Spirit fulfilling all the commandments perfectly. This is Sabbath rest.

Let us close with a little practice using Guigo's ladder.

Sit straight, put your hands in your lap, close your eyes, open your heart. And now present, open and awake, letting our thoughts go, continually renewing our focus on Christ as the Logos, the Law of Love living in the center of our being.

You may use Heb 4:7-12 or 1 Cor 13:13 as an aid to recenter.

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” ... So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. [Heb 4:7ff]

OR

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ... For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. [1 Cor 13]

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. **2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.