

Wendy's August Prayer Thoughts

People of the Jewish and Christian faith know that the 10 Commandments were given to Moses on Mount Sinai, whilst he was leading the Israelites from slavery in Egypt towards the Promised Land. They were written on two stone tablets by the hand of God, some 3,500 years ago, and are recorded in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. They are a set of instructions to be upheld by those chosen to be holy, set apart to love, in relationship with God. The Commandments lay down laws which stress the value of life, and the necessity of living responsibly in community. Jesus upheld them saying in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not think I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil." Matthew 5:17.

Paul emphasised how love is the fulfilling of the commandments/law Romans 13:8-10. Protestantism put them into catechisms for training young people, first in the Book of Common Prayer of 1549, then 1662; in the Nonconformist Savoy Declaration of 1661, and the Westminster Confession of 1643. Being able to recite the 10 Commandments was necessary before being able to share in Communion.

In 1560, Queen Elizabeth 1 ordered "the text of 'God's precepts' to be displayed at the east end in every Church in England", for the benefit of the people, also "to give some comely ornament and demonstration that the same was a place of religion and prayer." I am uncertain whether any exist from her reign. Many exist in the Wren Churches in London, which were rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1660. I was particularly struck by an old board in St Mary The Virgin, great Snoring, Norfolk. It hangs over a blocked door on the north wall. The Commandments in black script are flanked by paintings of the Evangelists, Moses and Aaron. It was by looking at the boards in St Chad's Church Handforth, Cheshire, during the Wednesday Communion service, that my brother Trevor seated on his wheelchair, breathing in oxygen, commented after the service of how they had given him comfort, as he prayerfully read them. Remembering this, I decided to recite each one individually, pause to meditate, then say or write a simple heartfelt prayer.

1. You shall have no other gods before Me. God of glory, there is none like You. All things exist from You. Thank You for making me in Your image. I pray that I might remain faithful to You, not waver or lack integrity. Strengthen me and Christians wherever they are in the world, to love You with all our hearts, our souls, our minds and our strength.

2 You shall not make for yourself an idol. Mighty God, I worship You in Your holiness and Majesty. You are Lord of Lords and King of Kings. I pray in the words of William Cowper: "The dearest idol I have known Whate'er that idol be, Help me to tear it from Thy throne, and worship only Thee."

3 You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Watchful God, help me to honour Your name and praise You with heart and tongue. "Blessed be the name of the Lord, the Holy One in all activities - in the Church, the home, work, leisure and the media.

4. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy Ever Present God, active in the whole of Your creation, thank You for ensuring a day of rest, the Sabbath, to recall our faith in You, to celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Strengthen all Christians by Your Word. Inspire those translating the Scriptures into diverse languages, to reach more people with the Gospel message.

5. Honour your father and your mother. Father God, families are a gift from You. May parents be respected, and communication kept open between generations. May I obey You by serving others, helping the needy both young and old, and caring for the sick and the disabled.

6. You shall not murder. Merciful God, may I never be seen to be merciless, or be guilty of destroying the lives of others. Help me to foster and promote reconciliation. I pray for those who blindly seek vengeance, for those ready to commit crimes of violence with or without weapons, that they may be prevented from evil acts and intentions.

7. You shall not commit adultery. God of purity, make me pure of heart and nature. May I not abuse myself, or anyone else. I pray for those suffering abuse today, whether it be physical, mental or social, and for those haunted by past experiences or fears. May they find peace as memories are healed, and living is seen to be safe.

8. You shall not steal. Law giving God, help me to be open and just at all times, morally upright and trustworthy. Cause those who steal to realise they are hurting others. May magistrates and judges pronounce unprejudiced sentences for those who have offended.

9. You shall not bear false witness. God of Truth, may I speak the truth. May I learn to control my tongue from fabricating lies, and spreading unnecessary gossip. May I remember that I am an ambassador for You, with the responsibility of being God's voice in the world, passing on His message of reconciliation.

10. You shall not covet. Righteous God, You desire that I live right, and have regard for others. Forgive me if I have fallen prey to envying others, for being jealous of their position, their expertise, and their assets. Help me to recognise greed, and avoid it, to cultivate contentment, as I focus on the riches You have given me.

It is good to say the Commandments and pray the Commandments