



IS YOUR MORAL COMPASS ACCURATE?

HOW TO FIND OUT

Ethical issues are often in the headlines, whether it involves leaders or others in society. Sometimes it is said that we are losing our moral compass. A compass is meant to give us accurate direction based on reality. Yet it may lose its accuracy and need to be corrected. How can we test and correct our moral compass? Who defines the standards of right and wrong? If we depend upon ourselves or others it will be mere opinion and likely to change. God has given a clear, absolute statement of our moral duty. This transcends human opinions. It is found in the Ten Commandments. This contains our moral duty towards God and towards others. Our moral compass must mirror this. We also need to make sure that we have the right understanding of these commandments. This can only be gained by comparing them with the rest of God's Word (the Bible) to understand the extent of their inward as well as outward requirements. In addition, we need to realise that when God commands something He also forbids us to do the opposite and vice versa. The following guide to the Ten Commandments has been updated and taken from an explanation of Christian belief published by the Church of Scotland in 1641. It remains helpful because it explains the timeless truths of the Bible. You can read the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17. The first four commandments outline our moral duty towards God. This is to love Him with all our heart, with all our soul and with our whole strength. The other six commandments outline our moral duty towards others. This is to love him or her as ourselves. For more explanation and proof from the Bible, read Questions 93-153 in the Westminster Larger Catechism.

1

PRESERVING GOD'S SUPREMACY

What does God require from us in the first commandment?

To love and revere God. To believe in Him above everything else, even the best things. We must confess Him before men accordingly.

What does God forbid in it?

We are forbidden to believe in any other. Neither should we love, fear or reverence any other more than the true God or even equally alongside Him.

2

PRESERVING GOD'S WORSHIP

What does God require from us in the second commandment?

To worship God as His own Word prescribes.

What does God forbid in it?

To worship Him by bowing to any image or by means of any other human invention.

3

PRESERVING GOD'S HONOUR

What does God require from us in the third commandment?

To praise and glorify God. To honour His Name and speak reverently of His attributes, His Word and His works.

What does God forbid in it?

All blasphemy, cursing or swearing as well as empty and deliberately false oaths. Any rash and irreverent use of God's name.

4**PRESERVING GOD'S DAY****What does God require from us in the fourth commandment?**

To spend the Sabbath day (the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday) seriously in God's worship and service. This involves hearing and reading God's Word, praying to God and praising Him. Holy conversation, heavenly meditation and works of godliness and charity are also included.

What does God forbid in it?

Anything which is sinful in itself is of course forbidden on this day. We must also not engage in any of our everyday work or recreation. This includes any activity not required by necessity or mercy.

Why are they forbidden?

Because doing these does not keep the Sabbath holy.

5**PRESERVING AUTHORITY****What does God require from us in the fifth commandment?**

To honour and obey our parents, rulers, masters, ministers, teachers and all in authority over us.

What does God forbid in it?

All ungodly disobedience and disrespectful behaviour towards them when they require lawful things.

6**PRESERVING LIFE****What does God require from us in the sixth commandment?**

To take care of the safety of our neighbour's health and life and to take care that he or she is not hurt by others. We must therefore drive away envy, hatred, malice, contempt for our neighbour and anything else harmful towards him or her.

7**PRESERVING PURITY****What does God require from us in the seventh commandment?**

To live chastely and soberly in our thoughts, words, actions and behaviour.

What does God forbid in it?

All uncleanness in our thoughts, words and actions. We must, therefore, avoid all filthy conversation, words, images and songs. Likewise we must refrain from other things that breed unlawful lusts such as drunkenness, gluttony, lasciviousness and bad company.

8**PRESERVING PROPERTY****What does God require from us in the eighth commandment?**

To be content with the means of living which God gives us in a lawful way, and to help others in need as we are able.

What does God forbid in it?

All covetousness in which we take unlawfully our neighbour's possessions. This may be by oppression, robbery, misusing the law, theft, deceit or by using false measurements or weights.

9**PRESERVING TRUTH****What does God require from us in the ninth commandment?**

To defend the reputation and good name of others and put a stop to derogatory talk about other people.

What does God forbid in it?

All lying, slandering, backbiting and words that discredit or damage the reputation of others. It also forbids all readiness to hear slander, lies and malicious criticism.

10**PRESERVING CONTENTMENT****What does God require from us in the tenth commandment?**

To rejoice in other people's prosperity and when any good has been done. We are also to be sorry for other people's hardship, and when any evil has been done.

What does God forbid in it?

All selfish desire in coveting things that do not lawfully belong to us. We are also forbidden from approving in our hearts any wrong done to others or trouble that they experience.

No one, except Jesus Christ, has kept these commandments perfectly. Sin is breaking any aspect of these commandments or failing to do what they require. Every sin deserves the punishment of God's curse and endless torment in hell. We cannot make up for what we have done wrong by trying to keep God's law. We can only be delivered from this by trust in Christ alone. Our own efforts will not save us. Dying on the cross, He received the punishment due to all that would trust in Him.