

“THE FATHER’S RULES” Exodus 19:1 - 20:21

INTRODUCTION

“It’s tough being a child. At every turn there are new laws: the Law of Crossing the Street, the Law of Speaking and Interrupting. Then there is the complex maze of the Dinner Table Law. Childhood is marked by the hearing and internalizing of instruction. If we accept and follow these customs, we become capable, functioning adults.

The book of Exodus describes the childhood of Israel. A loving father delivers the law to his children; it is encapsulated in the Ten Commandments.”

-Taken from Lifeguide Bible Studies, IVP

“In 1980, the United States Supreme Court ruled by a 5-4 decision in Stone v. Graham that the schoolchildren of Kentucky have the constitutional right not to be assaulted by the presence of the Ten Commandments on their classroom walls. The Court’s majority revealed its rationale, in part, with remarkable secular frankness: If the posted copies of the Ten Commandments are to have any effect at all it will be to induce the schoolchildren to read, meditate upon, perhaps to venerate and obey, the Commandments. However desirable this might be as a matter of private devotion, it is not a permissible state objective under the Establishment Clause. In short, the passive display of the ten Commandments was not permitted because some students might obey them.”

So, in one imperious swoop America’s highest court declared that the Decalogue [Decalogue: deca=ten; logue=word; therefore, ten words] (a document of incalculable influence that has provided the basis for the public morality of western culture, a text which for the first two hundred years of our nation’s history was universally used to teach English) was an improper display for impressionable young minds. This is secularism with a vengeance! As the Wall Street Journal wryly observed regarding the court’s ruling: “A citizen might be forgiven for suspecting that there is as much long-term danger in this sort of dogma as there is in the Ten Commandments hanging on schoolroom walls.”

“And indeed there is. Western culture is without a moral compass. The terrible epitaph of the days of Israel’s Old Testament judges is being lived out: “Every man did what was right in his own eyes.” Today it is commonplace to call “evil good, and good evil” (cf. Judges 17:6 and Isaiah 5:20, NASB). Our culture is truly foundering – and may soon be beached on the desolate shores of its own moral emptiness.”

-Kent Hughes, Discipline of Grace

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share about when your parents first gave you “freedom” in your growing up years.
2. What is important about the context of the commandments, as set by God in verse 2?
3. What is significant about the focus of the first four commands (vv.3-11)? What common thematic theme runs through them?
4. What logic do you find in the order of the final six commandments in verses 13-17?
5. The Israelites fall back in fear from the manifestations of God’s presence (vv.18-20). How can fear be a positive reaction to the laws of God? What are some lessons we can learn about fearing God?
6. What struck you today? Share about one of these commandments that presents a great challenge for you to live out?