

We sometimes hear

- Bring back the Lord's Prayer in school
- The world would be a better place if everyone followed the ten commandments
- Begs the question **does anyone follow the Ten commandments**
- Text asserts:

THE VALUE OF OBSERVATION

(double entendre - note carefully/watch - conform to)

Moses convened all Israel, and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; **you shall learn them and observe them diligently.**

WRITE THEM DOWN (rule of life)

These words the Lord spoke with a loud voice to (the) whole assembly at the mountain, out of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, and he added no more. He wrote them on **two stone tablets**, and gave them to me.

subdivision; 5/5; 4/6; 3/7

ULTIMATE VALUE AND BENEFIT (self-interest)

(i)ff only (you) had such a mind as this, to fear me and to keep all my commandments always, **so that it might go well with (you) and with (your) children for ever!** . . . You must therefore be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; **you shall not turn to the right or to the left.** You must **follow exactly the path** that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you are to possess.

Reality Check - review in context

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.

You **shall not make for yourself an idol**, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

You **shall not make wrongful use of the name** of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.

Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

You **shall not murder**.

Neither shall you commit **adultery**.

Neither shall you **steal**.

Neither shall you **bear false witness** against your neighbor.

Neither shall you **covet** your neighbor's wife. Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

OUR APPROACH

- cannot be literal (simplest and most literal reading)
- is obscured by the different in social context
- is interpreted, even by Jesus - summary of the law - (Mt 22:34)

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

ANOTHER LAWYER - who believes in the evolution of law itself, yet understands the value of first principles - ELIZABETH BENNETT

It was the profession of law that brought Elizabeth to the first real test of her Christian faith. She and her husband were, as attorneys, experts in American death penalty law and their careers centred on representing people who had been sentenced to death with the aim of sparing their lives. This work was frustrating, soul wrenching and often calamitous.

In 1988, early in their practice of this difficult and stressful work, Elizabeth and Bill visited Victoria and were struck by its natural beauty and, perhaps more importantly, by the cultural freshness of Canada: no death penalty, universal health care, and a host of other humanitarian attributes.

After purchasing a home in 1993, they returned to Victoria in 1997 in anticipation of retiring in Canada.

Meanwhile, back in the USA, a client's life journey was approaching an unnatural end. Elizabeth and Bill were representing Ron, a gentleman incarcerated for a death penalty crime. He really was a gentleman. Elizabeth had watched him transform as his faith grew in his confinement. He had become "like a brother" to her.

Even the most hardened of the prison guards had come to respect Ron because he made their jobs much easier. He had become a man of peace and a conciliator. He often managed to help other prisoners find peaceful solutions to their disputes. The guards did not want his life taken from him and his talents taken from them.

The idea that this man's life was going to be forfeit in her name and in the name of all the State's citizens and taxpayers caused great anguish for Elizabeth. She could not reconcile it with her values - or with her faith.

Jesus had been executed in another time, by another state, in the name of another people, and she could not believe that executions would sit well with him.

She was in Victoria, closing the purchase of the retirement home when she got word that Ron, her friend, was to be executed. He was removed from this life on 25 March 1998. In that moment of anguish she determined not to return to the United States of America and she did not.

She was shaken, fragile, and consumed with questions of faith and morality. During this devastating time a husband and wife team from St. Saviour's in Victoria West stayed with her. They were with her on that worst of nights when she would otherwise have been alone ... her husband was with Ron.

The kindness and caring of that Anglican couple strengthened and reinforced her faith. **She began to understand that times of deep trouble and confusion are times when one turns to ones faith, and not times when one turns away from it.** This terrible time confirmed for her that she really believes the words she speaks each Sunday morning in the company of friends, neighbors and God.