

## The Ten Principles that Govern My Relationship with Others

Biblical covenants are the way God chose to represent His ideals of relationship, His infinite love for His creatures, and His unshakable commitment to justice, righteousness, and love. Although God never changed (Psalms 105:8; 111:9), the way He related to His creatures—which, according to Hebrews 6:17, is the covenant—is a divine accommodation to human frailty. Since Eden, due to the fall and our constant rebellion, successive covenants were reestablished, and in each progressive phase of God’s covenant, we see light as different applications of the same covenantal principles are introduced or expounded with the objective to accommodate the feeble human responses and to reveal more about God and His character (Heb. 1:1-3). God’s final goal is, through his covenantal relationship that epitomizes and reveals His character, to live with us (Ezekiel 37:26) and in us (1 Corinthians 3:16; Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 12:9) forever (Revelation 21:3-4).

The written record of God’s covenant is in His Word, the Bible. Within the covenants, God revealed Himself to us (John 5:39), and He expects that—as we know Him more and more, and as we grasp His fullest revelation in Jesus—we walk in righteousness (1 Kings 8:58), following His footsteps as stipulated in His covenants (1 John 2:3-6). And as we do as He did and as He abides in us, we will bring others to the knowledge of God (1 Kings 8:60-61). In other words, the covenants are codified in the laws, statutes, and decrees/testimonies in God’s Word (Ps. 119:105-112). In them, God’s character is revealed, so behind each law, statute, decree, and testimony (and story) in Scripture are principles that reveal God’s character of love (Matt. 22:36-40; 1 John 4:8). Those high ideals are unattainable to us, broken humans, but when we are saved by God’s grace in Jesus, we can walk in the way He created us to be (Ephesians 2:7-10) through His Holy Spirit (Titus 3:3-7, Galatians 5:22-25).

Jesus Himself summarized all the principles of the Covenant that we are supposed to abide by in two overarching principles, which summarize the principles of the Decalogue and everything else that was revealed in the entire Bible, with the statements "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Another good summation is the one I use for my life as the 10 principles that govern my relationship with others, the one written by God’s finger: the Decalogue, which helps us to be like Him (1 Peter 1:15-16; Leviticus 19:2; 11:44-45) and relate with others as He does (Leviticus 19:18). In this framework, I see the Decalogue both as revealing principles of God’s character and as assurance of the promises that we will be reflecting the traces of His character revealed in the Decalogue by the Power of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26; Jeremiah 31:33). So, here is how I frame the Decalogue to personalize its principles and turn them into 10 principles to live by, which I abide by in my relationships with God and others:

1. Remember that the God of the Covenant – and no other “god” or person – was who saved me and He will always be there for me, in His **faithfulness**, when others forsake me. When I put Him first, he will take care of me in bad situations, and I don’t need to be rude/vengeful/belligerent to others because He is the one who will rescue me (Ex. 20:1-3).
2. God is my only source of **joy**, and he should be the only example I need to follow in all things, even my relationships (Exodus 20:4-6).
3. The Bible teaches us to emulate God’s character because we are His ambassadors and living letters to the world (2 Cor. 5:20; 3:2). So the third principle of the Decalogue reminds me that I should not take His name (i.e., His character) in vain. In all my human relations, I should not knowingly misrepresent the wholesomeness (the idea comes from the parallel concept of the Hebrew word “**shalom**”/**peace**) of His character in my human relations and with the created order (Ex. 20:7).
4. I will **submit** to His will all week long, conscientiously serving Him and others, so I can enter into His rest and commune with Him and His family (the believers who abide by His covenant) on the Sabbath (Ex. 20:8-11).
5. God wants me to have **gentleness/benignity/kindness** (lit. **benignity**, which leads to moral goodness, integrity) and respect those with authority over me in order to be respected and to live a long/plentiful life (Ex. 20:12).
6. God wants me to demonstrate to others the same **love** he demonstrated to me by recommending every act and attitude that can harm or hurt others, physically, emotionally, and spiritually (Ex. 20:13, cf. Matt. 5:21-26).
7. The Lord invites me to have **patience/long-suffering/longanimity** in my more intimate relationship, upholding my covenants as He upholds His (Ex. 20:14).
8. The 8<sup>th</sup> principle in the Decalogue taught me **self-control** so I don’t create trouble by claiming what is not mine or by letting my desires go wild/unrestrained (Ex. 20:15).
9. God wants me to be good (**goodness**/uprightness of heart and life) as He is good, and that causes me never to gossip, talk falsely, or badly about others, friends, or foes. Only what is good and just can come out of my mouth (Ex 20:16).
10. The 10<sup>th</sup> principle teaches me to be **meek** and content with what I have since what he gave me is plenty and perfect (Ex. 20:17). By doing so, I can live well with anybody, rich or poor.