

# Back to the Basics

## The Ten Commandments, Pt. 1

In one episode of M\*A\*S\*H, Fr. Mulcahy made the comment, “The 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment really takes a beating here.” As a Quaker, this didn’t make sense. The 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment is “You shall not murder” and this is a hospital, where lives are saved. I didn’t realize at the time that there are two numberings of the Ten Commandments employed by Christians, called the Roman Catholic system and the Reformed system. Most Protestants use the Reformed system while Lutherans use the Roman Catholic system. The difference is in the 1<sup>st</sup> and Last Commandments. The Roman Catholic system takes “No other gods” and “No graven images” together, while the Reformed separates them. The Reformed takes the commandments on coveting together as one while the Roman Catholic separates them. What difference does it make? Those who follow the Reformed system have a problem with icons and statues in churches. They are, to them, graven images. Those following the Roman Catholic system see statues as idols if they are worshiped. Icons and church statues are aides to worship for them. I just wanted to clear that up if you’re used to the Reformed system and are reading this. Now, to the Catechism.

### The First Commandment

#### **You shall have no other gods.**

*What does this mean?* We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

The First Table of Commandments (1-3) can be summarized this way: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (**Matt. 22:37; Deut. 6:5**). All three of them speak to our relationship with God. Of course, the God we’re talking about is the Triune God of the Bible (**1 Cor. 8:4; 2 Cor. 13:14**). We will see as we progress that all the other Commandments are based on this one. If the First Commandment isn’t kept, none of them can be. Because of Original Sin, none of us can fear, love, and trust in God above all things. So, we fail at all of them. We also see that “fear, love, and trust in” mean that there are a negative and positive side to each Commandment. Each one warns us to refrain from something and encourages us to do something else.

In this Commandment, God warns us to stay away from idolatry, that is, to not have other gods. Idolatry is 1) worshipping any creature or thing as God (**Ps. 115:4; Phil. 3:19**), 2) believing in a god who is not the Triune God of the Bible (**Matt. 28:19**), 3) fearing, loving, or trusting in any one or thing else above God (**Ps. 14:1; Matt. 10:37**), and 4) joining in the worship of one who is not the Triune God of the Bible (**2 Cor. 6:14-15**). It’s not enough to say, “I believe in God.” Who or what do I put first? Is there anything I fear more than God? Is there anyone I love more than God? Is there anything I trust more than God? Who do I turn to first in times of trouble?

This positive side, as mentioned earlier, is to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. To fear God means to revere Him and honor Him above all else and avoid what displeases Him (**Prov. 8:13; Matt. 10:28**). To love God above all things means to cling to Him and gladly serve Him with our lives (**Ps. 73:25-26; Matt. 22:37**). To trust in God above all else is to commit our lives completely to Him and rely on Him for everything (**Ps. 118:8; Pr. 3:5**). Do I revere God so that I try to please Him? Do I hold tight to God and give Him my life? Do I rely on God in times of blessing and trial?

Of course, the only Person ever to be able to keep this and all the other Commandments is Jesus Christ, the God-Man (**1 John 1:8; Phil. 2:3**). But that's no excuse for us to not try. This is how God has created us to live. If we could keep these Commandments perfectly, we would have fulfilled lives. This is what it means to have no other gods. We see that it's not about believing there is a God. It's not even about saying, "I believe in God." It's about being sold out, fully committed to God. It's about God being your all in all (**Ephesians 1:22-23**). Next week, we will look at the Second Commandment, "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God."