

# Freedom is Obedience (Exodus 20:1-17)

## Video 2

Perhaps you're new to the Ten Commandments. What helps is recognising that the Commandments are split in two. The first four commandments are about how we should relate to God. The other six commandments are about how we should relate to each other.

Put together, they show that true human freedom is found in honouring God and caring for one another.

Jesus had the same view of reality.

On one occasion, he was asked a theological conundrum of the day. Which is the greatest of the commandments of Moses? There were 613 to choose from, so it sparked a lot of debate.

Yet Jesus doesn't hesitate:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Jesus was asked for the greatest commandment – *just one*. But Jesus offers *two*.

It signals something important. Jesus thought that what it means to be human could only be summed up in two dimensions: love for God and love for neighbour.

This vision ties in perfectly with the Ten Commandments. Remember: four commandments concern devotion to God, six concern devotion to our fellow humans.

And that leads to two implications.

Firstly, the Ten Commandments show us that we should reject religious hypocrisy. We should reject any vision for life that encourages us to love God, but which leaves us cold towards each other.

And secondly, the Ten Commandments show us that we also go wrong if we find freedom in simply serving others but ignoring God, the one who created us.

To be truly human – to be truly free – we need to be in solid relationships of love. Love in two directions. We need to love God *and* each other.

But why should this be?

There's a hint in another part of Jesus' teaching, which builds upon the Ten Commandments:

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Mercy must lie at the heart of human relationships, says Jesus. Why? Because mercy characterises God. And he has made a universe that reflects what he is like.

And that means we cannot truly show love and mercy in human relationships until we've experienced them from God.

And the Ten Commandments expose our need for mercy.

Some of us are drawn toward paths of religious hypocrisy, others towards ethical agnosticism. All of us fall short of the vision of humanity the Ten Commandments outline.

But no sooner is our need for mercy exposed, we see that mercy given in Jesus.

Jesus never fell short of God's law. He always loved his Father and his neighbour. Yet Jesus willingly took the curse that rightly belongs to us law-breakers. Which means he can free all those who trust in him from the law's judgement on our lives.

Jesus' death reveals God to be merciful and compassionate. A God who is for us, who is worthy of our love.

Here, after all, is the God who rescues *first*, and who only then calls us to obey.

Having won our allegiance, he calls us to true humanity. We love him and love others as he has loved us. We experience what it means to be human.

And then we are free.