

LORD

Our fall discipleship series focuses on the Ten Commandments. Not only what they teach us not to do, but what to do. Jesus is Savior and Lord. Once we know Him as Savior, it's time to begin to allow His lordship in every corner of our lives. I can easily recognize Jesus as "Lord" in some abstract way. He's Lord of the universe. He's Lord of all history. But it gets harder when I think about His lordship in my own life. Is He really my master when I'm thinking about my relationships with my family? Is Jesus my first consult and guide when I'm arranging my finances? So much of discipleship is simply about loving Jesus more—more than desires of the flesh, more than money, more than what my neighbor has. The Ten Commandments are a great measure of our hearts. Do we love Jesus more than these? Jesus is Lord.

LORD • EXODUS 20:1-3 • Tim McConnell • August 19, 2018

On the afternoon of January 15, 2009, US Airways Flight 1549 took off from New York's LaGuardia airport. Less than five minutes later, the plane flew into a flock of Canada Geese, disabling both engines. The co-pilot immediately began working through the sequences to restart the engines while the captain, Chesley Sullenberger, had a quick decision to make. Certain he could not make it to the next nearest runway, Sully brought the plane down on the surface of the Hudson River. Of the 155 lives on board the plane, many were injured but all survived. Sully was a hero. A "savior," with a small "s," to all those people. You have heard this story. But here's the surprising part. Not one of those passengers called Sully later and asked for advice on their marriage. None of them asked him to guide them through parenting or advise them on finances. As far as I know, the event did not produce a single Sully-follower. There are no "Sullians" or "Cheslians" who have devoted their lives to becoming more like Chesley Sullenberger, no books about growing more in the likeness of Sully and certainly no chapels or shrines devoted to Sully worship. He was their savior that day, but he is not Lord.

With Jesus, we use this language "Lord and Savior." Two different things. Jesus can be your Savior, but somehow He can be your Savior without being your Lord. I remember the first time someone asked me that question in a Bible Study when I was a new believer: Well, Jesus is your Savior, Tim, but is He your Lord? The phrase comes from 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen." Today we kick off a new series together, **Lord**, to ask ourselves, is Jesus my Savior and Lord over my life? Have I accepted the lordship of Jesus in my life? Is He not only my Savior, but my Lord? And the instrument, the tool we are going to use to evaluate this question is one of God's greatest gifts: The Ten Commandments. Following Jesus means following Him as Lord. If we don't learn to follow Jesus as Lord, if we are saved but fail to follow, we miss out on the life that is truly life, we miss out on the life Jesus won for us. Jesus came to save us, but that's just the beginning. He came to give us life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus came so that we would not perish in our sins. That's good—that's amazing. We are saved. Then

"whoever believes in him shall not perish *but have eternal life.*" That's the part we want to explore. Eternal life starts right now when we look to Jesus our Savior and start to follow Him as Lord. The Lordship of Jesus is the life we were made for.

So, why the Ten Commandments? What are the Ten Commandments? Is God just some nasty, cosmic curmudgeon sitting in heaven dreaming up things to tell us not to do? What is this we read? The Ten Commandments starts, "And God spoke all these words: 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me'" (Exodus 20:1-3). The people of God, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had wound up in Egypt, which is a lovely place to be—unless you're a slave. Originally they went to Egypt on good terms, but over the years they were relegated to a servant class and eventually into a slave nation, abused and misused and beaten into submission as a labor force for the pharaohs and their empire-building ambitions. God sent Moses to release them and they found freedom. Slaves no more. Now they are free. Why would God create a random list of rules to enslave them again? Would that make any sense at all? Why would He go through all the effort to set His people free just to make them slaves again to some arbitrary set of rules? The Ten Commandments are not chains to bind us; they are guardrails on the highway of life to keep us from destruction. They are freedom tools. Walk in the way of God and you will be free. Every time we break God's law, we think we are acting in freedom, but we become bound and burdened and beat up. Walk in God's ways and you will know what freedom really is.

But here's where we need to quickly acknowledge: we are not able to live out the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are in two parts; the first four are how we are meant to relate to God, and the next six are how we are meant to relate to one another. In both cases, they set a standard of perfect holiness. We will not reach that standard. So, when you read the Ten Commandments, they are there for three purposes: **(1)** God gave us the Ten Commandments to restrain wickedness, to keep us from doing one another harm; **(2)** God gave us the Ten Commandments to reveal holiness to us and lead us to Christ our Savior, to convict us of the fact that we need help; and **(3)** God gave us the Ten Commandments as a guide for life, an

instrument to learn God's way of life, a matrix to use to measure our own growth and development as Christ-followers. A guide to knowing God as Lord.

So, where does it begin? It begins with this first question that will also guide us all the way through the series, "Is God the Lord of your life?" Verse 2, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." By the way, we don't *make* Jesus our Lord. We create a lot of confusion when we talk that way, and I understand why we talk that way. We say "You *made* Jesus your Savior, but have you *made* Jesus your Lord?" But we don't *make* Jesus anything. He *is* the Savior. He *is* the Lord. Either you live into that reality or you attempt to live out a lie. So God starts here, "I am the Lord your God." Not, "I'd like to be your Lord," or "you should consider making Me your God." I *am* the Lord your God. But we are reminded of God's love when we reflect on God's actions. It's His faithfulness that leads us to confident faith. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt." Remember that? You were stuck, you were enslaved, your life was narrow and painful and purposeless—I brought you out of that. I'm your Savior. Know too, I am your Lord.

It reminds me of the famous episode in Jesus' life with His disciples in the New Testament when He sent Peter and the disciples out ahead of Him in a boat across a huge lake, and when a storm came in they saw Jesus walking toward them on the water. They were all very scared, but, in Matthew 14:28: "'Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.'" He did, and Peter got out of the boat and walked on water. But when he saw what he was doing, saw the waves and wind, he started to sink, so he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus saved him. Then, it says, "And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'" (Matthew 14:32-33). Salvation is an instant. Lord, save me! Jesus has the authority to save you. You are drowning in your sins; Jesus has paid the penalty for your sins on the cross. To call out to Him, to call upon His name is to be saved. In an instant and for eternal life. But when He got back in the boat, everyone saw He was the Lord, the Son of God. They worshipped Him. One way of talking about the first commandment is to say it defines God and God alone as the only object of worship. To be saved takes an instant. Lord, save me! To know Him as Lord takes a lifetime. John Stott wrote, "You can become a Christian in a moment, but not a mature Christian. Christ can

enter, cleanse and forgive you in a matter of seconds, but it will take much longer for your character to be transformed and molded to his will. It takes only a few minutes for a bride and bridegroom to be married, but in the rough-and-tumble of their home it may take many years for two strong wills to be dovetailed into one. So when we receive Christ, a moment of commitment will lead to a lifetime of adjustment" (John Stott, *Basic Christianity*).

A moment your Savior, a lifetime your Lord. What does it mean to have Jesus as Lord? It's said to be the earliest Christian confession, the earliest thing Christians used to say to one another to confidently proclaim their faith: "Jesus is Lord." It meant, of course, Jesus is Lord—Caesar is not. Jesus is Lord—Herod is not. Jesus is Lord—the devil is not. It also means, Jesus is Lord—I am not. To have a Lord is a different way of life than we usually see, and maybe different than we have been living. To have a Savior is easier to understand, but to have a Lord is something else. If the lordship of Jesus is the life we were made for; if I want to live into Jesus, not only being my Savior, but being my Lord, what does that look like? Let me offer you four ideas: **(1) A Lord is one to whom I defer.** In every area of life, I am asking "Lord, what do You think? What would You have for me here?" I have my own ideas, I have my own opinions, but I am actively working to make those secondary to the ideas and opinions of my Lord. I am actively cooperating with the Spirit of God in me to take every thought captive to Christ. If I find my Lord and I in disagreement—I defer. **(2) A Lord is one I trust.** I give my trust. I lend my confidence. He is already my Savior. He gave His life for me. I trust Him fully with my life. I know He has my best interest at heart. I trust Him. Think of Peter stepping out onto the water. That's trust. Think of Peter calling out to Jesus in need as he sank down in the water. That's trust. **(3) A Lord is one I obey.** Like a soldier to a general, like a knight to a king, like a football team executing the play the quarterback calls, I don't just want to hear my Lord, I want to obey my Lord. My posture is one of joyful and humble obedience. How much pause is there in you between the Lord's prompts and your joyful obedience? Some have said happiness is found for the Christian in joyful obedience, in being a walking "yes" to Jesus, responding to the master like the strings of a violin to the bow. The Lord is the one I lovingly, responsively obey.

Finally, **(4) A Lord is one I represent.** If Jesus is my Lord, I am His servant and in one way or another by cooperating with Him, I participate in His Kingdom. Kings used to send messengers out with their seal—the seal was a way of saying, this person

represents me. If you mess with them, you mess with me! If you read your passport, the U.S. government makes a similar claim there. It's nice to read sometimes when you're on a plane headed to a dangerous country. If Jesus is my Lord, I am a representative of His rule, an emissary of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is where God is the King. It's where life is lived as God would have it. It begins within your own heart and in your own life as the lordship of Jesus takes root and expands through every part of who you are. Soon you find something growing within you, a little branch of the Kingdom in your heart starts to grow stronger and more beautiful than the stone and steel kingdoms of this world. Your life changes an awful lot the moment you see yourself as a representative of the Lord.

So, you have a Lord. Here's what we want you to do. Outside you will find two "Lord" walls—our Lord boards. They are covered over with sticky notes with a little message on each. Each week, we will tell you which color to pull, but we want you to pull all the sticky notes off for that color on that week. We really need you to do this, or we are going to be pulling a lot of sticky notes off ourselves! Pull the sticky note for that week, take it home or to work or to school, and stick it up again. Stick it somewhere you need to remember the particular challenge that week. So this week it looks like this. Pull all these off and stick them where you need a reminder: You have a Lord.

What are you facing this week? You have a Lord. Some of you are headed to new places or going back to school for a new semester. You have a Lord who goes before you. Some of you kids have new teachers—did you get your new teacher yet?—and new grades. Remember, you don't have to be afraid. You have a Lord. Some are facing medical challenges, illness, life-threatening things. Listen now, don't be afraid. You have a Lord. Some are reentering the press and pressure of the fall schedule and the family is not on a good footing, the marriage is rough, the foundations feel insecure. You have a Lord. Don't forget. The Lord your God is a mighty God, He is greater than all you face. The Lord is over all things; bigger than any diagnosis, stronger than anything that stands against you. Greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world. The Lord your God is with you wherever you go! He will never leave or forsake you. You have a Lord, the Lord, the Lord God Almighty. He is yours, and you are His, in Jesus.

STUDY GUIDE

LORD • EXODUS 20:1-3

UP: Connect With God Through Spending Time in God's Word

Read the passage for the week: Exodus 20:1-3. Allow a few moments to silently reflect on what you heard. Underline or note words or phrases that seem meaningful. Pray for your study of God's Word.

- The first part of Exodus tells the story of how God freed Israel from slavery in Egypt, sustained them in the desert with manna and water, and then renewed His relationship with them. These verses are the first stipulation in that relationship. Is God asking too much from the Israelites with this first commandment? Why or why not?
- The Israelites would later struggle to live out this command. They regularly adopted the gods of other nations, thinking they could have the tabernacle/temple, the sacrifices, be worshippers of Yahweh *and* have a little Baal or Dagon on the side. Is there really a problem trying to worship other gods alongside Yahweh?
- Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Matt. 6:24). In what ways does this reinforce this first commandment?
- Augustine of Hippo determined that people are most often discontent because their loves are "out of order." He realized that what a person loves most is what most influences their actions. If you were fully committed to loving Jesus above all else, what would be different about your life?
- Have you determined whether you desire God to be Lord of your life? What does this mean for you? If not, why not?

OUT: Connect With the World Around Us by Joining God in God's Mission

Spend a few moments brainstorming how you could be outwardly focused this fall. Will you sign up for CityServe? Is there a way in which you could bless your neighbors? How can you demonstrate that Jesus is Lord of your life?

IN: Connect With the Family of God

As fall is kicking off, First Pres is re-launching many of its regular programs. Pray for these ministry efforts: that the church is able to show Christ's love to our city, for the leaders of the GTW classes, Sunday communities and Life Groups, that these would be places for new people to discover God's love. Pray that these will encourage others to make Jesus the Lord of their lives.