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## Monumental Ten Commandments

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The recent controversy over the removal of the monument of the Ten Commandments in the Alabama Judicial Building has moved me to rethink what the commandments have meant to me - how they have regenerated and shaped my life.

When I was a child, my parents would tuck me into bed each night and teach me one of the 10 until I could repeat them all. My parents talked about the meaning of the Commandments and frequently referred to them. Here's a synopsis of these discussions as I remember them.

Having one God meant putting God first. Not bowing down to other gods was resisting peer pressure. Not taking the name of God in vain meant not swearing.

Keeping the Sabbath day holy included attending Sunday School or church weekly. Honoring your father and mother meant respecting your parents as representatives of the Father-Mother God.

Not killing, not committing adultery, not stealing were self-evident. Not bearing false witness was not gossiping or telling lies. And not coveting was extremely useful in refusing to want every toy that playmates had.

As the Bible recommends, I strove to write these divine commands on the table of my heart (see Prov. 3:3). This often changed my actions. When making decisions, I tried to put God first. With God as the top priority, my personal likes and dislikes faded in significance. I soon realized that if I succeeded in putting God first in my thought and motivation, it was easier to obey the other nine commands.

Not that there isn't room for continual improvement. The Commandments grow in authority. The Big Ten demand much more of me today than they did when I was a child.

For example, I really have to watch not stealing. If I'm not careful, I'll steal away another's opportunity for spiritual growth. I have to resist telling them what to do or how to think just because it seems obvious to me. This would deprive them of the joy of spiritual discovery. And who knows, I might be wrong. I need to trust God's communication through His Word and directly to their hearts.

And what about killing? It's all too easy to kill time in front of the television or by avoiding what's important. In fact, I've begun to think of procrastination as a form of killing. It's procrastination that deserves the death penalty.

Not coveting has gone far beyond wanting someone's possessions. It's not wishing for their opportunities or for my life to be like theirs. It's defining success on my own terms rather than in reference to someone else.

Not bearing false witness has come to mean no criticizing or complaining. No adultery has grown to include faithfulness in ethics as well as in morality.

Honoring one's father and mother still means respecting them. But it also implies making time for them. Honor means giving ample time for listening and appreciation.

Not taking God's name in vain includes praying with one's whole heart. Praying one thing and doing another no longer counts as obedience.

Honoring the Sabbath now includes working for God the other six days. God isn't relegated to an hour a week. Working faithfully for six days, to me, means laboring to learn God's will and do it as we go. Then we can rest on the seventh, rejoicing in the lessons learned.

Worshiping no other images means that God is Spirit, not limited to material form. He is the one, infinite God without rival or equal. One God means one power and that One is good. In a world of rivalry and war, there's an increasing demand to demonstrate one God.

As the issue of displaying the Commandments in public places plays itself out in the courts, I'm sure that many others are also thinking through the value of these living laws that can transform the heart and form the fabric of our lives.