

## **'NO OTHER GODS' and 'NO GRAVEN IMAGES'**

**Week #1 of a 5-Week Series, "Prosperity's 10 Commandments"**

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So this woman goes to the post office to buy stamps for her Christmas cards. And she said, "I'd like 50 Christmas stamps for my cards. And the clerk says, *"What denomination?"* And she says, *"Oh my God, has it really come to that? If that's the case, then I'll have six Catholic, 12 Methodist, and 32 Baptist."*

You know, sometimes in life, we have misunderstandings that we aren't just clear about certain things. And one of them, for me, were the Ten Commandments. I never really liked them or their tone. I mean, there was just something about them that just sounded heavy and serious. I liked the movie, but I didn't really like the Ten Commandments, themselves, and particularly the way they were expressed. The tone: It sounded more like scolding, you know, a child. You know, *"Don't do this. Don't fight. Don't call names."* Eight out of ten all begin with some aspect of *"No this"* or *"Don't do that."*

And so, what I really did like was the Beatitudes. When it would ... there was something some more inviting and warm: *"Blessed,"* you know, *"are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."* You know, *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."*

And, in each of those, there's an invitation into a certain mindset. And then, if you reach that mindset, your life will be enriched with something else. I really loved that: how positive it was. And you know, the Ten Commandments, just kind of, *"Do what I say,"* and you know, a lot on the *"Don'ts."* And I just didn't connect with it. However, over time and greater awareness, you really see the brilliance and the insight, and even the need and the reason for the tone of how they were expressed.

If you look overall at the Bible, it's really about the evolution and the unfolding of consciousness; the evolution and the unfolding of our awareness and our understanding and our relationship with God. In Genesis, God is an anthropomorphic God walking around the Garden of Eden. You know, and then in the next phase, you don't see God anymore. You know, God is out there in the sky and is doling out blessings, but also punishments. And then move to a phase of God just doing the blessings.

And you go into the New Testament, and you hear *"God is love"* and *"God is Spirit."* And, *"Those who worship must worship in truth and spirit."* And then to Jesus' words in Luke 17:21; it says, *"The kingdom of God is within you."*

So you see from anthropomorphic up in the sky to Spirit and love to within us. You see that evolution. And the thing that is important to remember is that the Ten Commandments were really written to that aspect of our human selves that are immature and unevolved. That part of us that can be closed-minded or childish, or doesn't listen or is not disciplined.

You know, so how many people have ever been childish and undisciplined and not listened? Anybody? [Congregants laugh] I mean, how many people have ever done or said something you know that was not kind, but you said it and did it anyway? I mean, so it is written for that kind of mindset: that lack of spiritual maturity and awareness.

Georgiana Tree West said that the Ten Commandments are the cardinal spiritual laws for humanity. She says that *"card"* means hinge: that all of the other laws hinge on these basic fundamentals of spiritual law and spiritual actions. And it requires our understanding and our practice to bring them forth and develop the level of blessings that they can bring into our lives. And she says that, if we follow these, that it will attract a greater flow of abundance in all areas of our lives. That we will live more fully; we will live more joyously; more peacefully; and more abundantly.

So today we're going to begin a five-week series on her book, called "Prosperity's Ten Commandments." Taking the Ten Commandments and seeing them through the lens of how we attract more prosperity in our lives. Each week we're going to do two commandments.

So we'll start with the first, which is: **THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE YOU.** And she said, what that is saying is that thou shalt look to no other source but God for your supply. And it means that we turn to God in all things, because God is the source of all good in our lives. God is the source of life. God is the source of every breath we take and every beat of our heart. God is the source of all the love in our lives; of all the peace in our lives; all the goodness; and all the blessings. God is our source. God is the underlying substance to all the good that is or could ever be.

You know, the Bible is filled with prosperity promises and reassurances of God that this abundant goodness is available to all of us. Here's a few. 2 Corinthians says, *"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance; so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."*

You know, the 23rd Psalm says, *"The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want."* So when we are aware that God is our shepherd, it means that we are guided; that we are protected; that we are provided for.

The Book of Jeremiah says, *"'For surely I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord. 'plans to prosper you, not harm you; plans to give you hope and a future.'"*

And finally, Jesus said, *"It is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom."*

So this first commandment is not just saying that God is your source in a passive way; it is saying that we must actively put God first. We must actively make God a priority in our lives ... which means to always turn to God; always ask God; always listen to God; always trust God; always love God; always connect to God. You know, to immerse our mind in the Mind of God.

This first commandment is the fundamental law, you know, of living abundantly and living a joyful and wonderful life. And it is to actively pursue a greater awareness and connection to God.

Paramahansa Yogananda was asked by one of his students, *"So tell me what it is to connect with God. How do I find God?"* And this is what he said. He said, *"During every little period of leisure, plunge your mind into the thought of God. Talk to him intimately. He is the nearest of the near and the dearest of the dear. Love him like a miser loves his money; like an ardent man loves His sweetheart; like a drowning man loves breath. When you yearn for God with that sincerity, with that level of intensity and desire, God will be revealed to you."*

Now, the first commandment is saying that God is your source. Turn always to God. And to do three things: to seek God with all your heart; trust God in all situations; and delight yourself in God when you pray.

When was the last time you delighted yourself in God? You know, it's funny that, when we think about prayer, we sometimes think that it's kind of onerous; it's hard. It's something I need to do; something I have to do. It doesn't exactly spring a level of joy and delight when we think about prayer. And can you think of anything more delightful and joyful than unifying your mind with the Intelligence and the Creative Power and Energy that created the universe?

Prayer is a unifying of the mind to that very Source that made the sun and the stars and the oceans and hummingbirds and giraffes and us. That we are an expression of that Intelligence, and prayer is a unification of that. There is only one Presence and one Power, and we uniting our minds in it is the most powerful thing that we can do.

In Philippians it says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." That we should rejoice and be delighted in our time of prayer, you know, that God is our source. That we have access to fullness and the allness and the goodness of God always.

And saying that God is our source is an awareness that there's only one Source, but there are many channels. Sometimes we think our job is our source. It's not; it's just a channel. You know, sometimes we think money is our source. It's not; it's just a channel and a vehicle and avenue for God to bless our lives. We think that our spouse, our family, our friends -- as important as they are, they're not our source; they're channels. We think that a bank and our investments are our source. No, they're just channels. We think Target and Fry's and Costco are our source. No, they're not; they're just channels.

You know, there are all kinds of different ways -- music, pets, nature; they're all channels. God has unlimited channels -- a way to bless our lives, enrich our lives, and have the abundant flow of good move in our lives. And those channels can be increased and multiplied in so many ways. The more we connect; you know the more we know that we're one with God.

You know, she says -- Georgiana says -- the first step in fully living this commandment, and opening more channels of good to live abundantly, is to have faith in the omnipresent substance of God that underlies all good. To know that, no matter what situation you're in or where you are in the world, that underlying substance of God is right there available to us, in us, and all around us.

And so it's an important thing for us to constantly and consistently connect and build our faith and keep seeking God. In life two things are happening: you're either contracting or you're expanding, including our faith. Ask yourself this question: Is my faith currently expanding or is it contracting? Is my spiritual practice and prayer life -- is it expanding or is it contracting? You know, is my relationship with God currently expanding or contracting? And we have to be in the work of constantly seeking -- constantly expanding -- if we want to keep that flow moving in all areas of our lives.

You know, Hannah More Kohaus wrote a prayer called "The Prayer of Faith." It was one of the first things I learned when I went to Unity Village. And it really sums up this first commandment: that there should be no other gods before us; that God is our source. And she wrote:

*"God is my help in every need;  
God does my every hunger feed;  
God walks beside me, guides my way  
Through every moment of the day.  
  
I now am wise, I now am true,  
patient, kind, and loving, too.  
All things I am, can do and be  
Through Christ, the Truth that is in me.  
  
God is my health, I can't be sick;  
God is my strength, unfailing, quick;  
God is my all; I know no fear,  
Since God and love and Truth are here."*

This first commandment really tells us there is no other God, which means that God should be our priority. You know, that God should be the first in our lives, and we should value it above anything and everything else. That we should always be seeking that connection; always be seeking that awareness. And be delighted in that experience.

The second commandment is that: **THOU SHALT MAKE NO GRAVEN IMAGES OR IDOLS TO WORSHIP.**

And so, basically, the first commandment is saying is you are attracted -- that you have access to the one Source that brings you all good. And the second one is saying: Don't mess that up! [Congregants laugh] If you have access to the Source of all abundance, it's saying: don't create images of lack and limitation.

Let me give you an example. Remember the story of the children of Israel? They were freed from the bondage and slavery in Egypt -- incredible miracle. Then they were the Red Sea, which parted -- incredible miracle. God is their Source. God is their Source. Miracles are happening. And then Moses goes up Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments. And, you know, what do they do when he's gone? They get impatient. They get cranky, whiny, frustrated. And they start partying. And then they start making a golden calf to worship.

And my question would be: Wow! Look how quickly they forgot that God was their Source, even though proven over and over again. Look how quickly they lost their faith! Look how quickly they forgot the truth. And that is us, as well. That we do that same thing. God has blessed us, done miracles in our lives. Yet, whatever it is we've got now, we start looking for other ways to make it happen, instead of looking to God first.

Let me ask you a question: What's the difference between Truth -- with a capital T -- and beliefs? Truth are God's laws; God's love; all the immutable spiritual principles that will never change. That are always available to us. That is truth with a capital T. Beliefs are a set of thoughts or ideas that we have in our minds that we believe are true that aren't always true. That aren't necessarily true.

*"Life is unfair."* Truth or belief? You know, *"You can't trust people."* Truth or belief? *"It's bad luck for a cat to run across you."* Truth or belief? I mean, it is amazing! *"I'll catch a cold if I go outside with my hair wet."* Truth or belief?

I'm telling you, we have all kinds of beliefs that we think are true. And they're not! And they're always limiting ourselves. They're always blocking the flow of good in our lives and distracting us from our connection and our faith and our oneness with God.

In my family, my dad used to say, *"If you want to start a project, it's always best -- good luck -- to start it on a Tuesday."* What? [Congregants laugh] I like that it was positive, but what? Another one he had was: on the first day of the month, get up early and run around the house and say, *"Rabbit, rabbit, rabbit!"* [Congregants laugh] For real. Even last month, my sister texted me, *"Rabbit, rabbit, rabbit."* [Congregants laugh] I mean, it is absolutely crazy!

Do you remember the movie, "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" or something? Didn't he say, *"Everything will be made better if you spray some Windex on it?"* [Congregants laugh] We have all these beliefs that aren't true; are not productive; and some of them not healthy. And we're living our lives out of them. We have access to the abundance and goodness of God, and we're limiting by holding these kind of negative, untrue beliefs. Diverting our faith and our energy; giving our power to them. They're like idols that we're worshipping.

Let me give you more. One of the idols that we worship is fear. And the reason I say that is because we give fear more power over us than our faith in God. How many times have you ever not tried something because you were afraid? Afraid of rejection, afraid of fear, failure? That's a graven idol! An image that we worship is fear. Because once it's taking our faith from God, we're giving our power away to these things. Also poverty and lack: thinking there just isn't enough; there's not enough. The scarcity mentality and also the *"I'm not enough"* mentality creates unworthiness.

You know, sometimes we give power away to food, thinking food's the answer; food will make me feel better. Or alcohol or sex. I mean ... and there's nothing wrong with these things. It's when it's crossing

that threshold of getting in our way of putting God first, and of putting our faith in God. You know, there are all kinds of false beliefs we're living out of that just aren't true. Again, that are taking away our focus and our faith in knowing that God is our source.

Another idol that we bow to is approval. You ever work hard to get someone's approval? And you knew it wasn't really healthy, but you were still doing it. I mean, there are all kinds of things: power, status, control, success. You know, or being active and busy all the time. We think those things will make our lives better. But it's when we start thinking, you know, that we have more faith in them than we do in God.

And the biggest graven idol that we have is, of course, money. And there's nothing wrong with money. But it's when we believe that money the answer to all of our problems, and it crosses that threshold; that's when it becomes a negative force. Because the negativity is in our mind. They worshipped a golden calf; we think money's the golden ticket to all of our problems. Again, nothing wrong with money. Having lots of money is good! It's when we begin to believe different things about it.

You remember the story in the Book of Matthew, Chapter 19, of the rich man -- the rich young man? He said, *"Hey, I want to have eternal life, Jesus. What do I do?"*

[Jesus] said, *"Follow the Ten Commandments."*

*"Yeah, I do that already." He said, "What else should I do?"*

[Jesus] said, *"Well, I think you should go sell all your possessions and then give your money to the poor."* And then he was sad and he just walked away, because he wanted to follow Jesus, but he didn't want to give these things up.

There's nothing wrong with having possessions. The problem here is that he was possessed by his possessions. Sometimes we are so attached to certain things -- whether they be material or not - that it actually gets in the way of deepening our faith and allowing ourselves to let go and actually have faith and trust God fully. It's like, *"No, let me hold on to this."*

The fact is: we have access to the fullness and the goodness and the allness of God all the time. Yet, we choose to think of images that are lack-based; that are fear-based; that are putting our power and our happiness outside ourselves.

Georgiana said this: *"The lack in our lives comes from a wrong and negative use of our creative minds. And the remedy lies in making the right use of that same creative energy, and so bringing the limitless good of the invisible realm of Spirit into manifestation."* Into our lives. The remedy for abundant life is not to have graven images -- not images of lack -- but instead to replace it with images of abundance; images of possibility; images of happiness; and fulfillment; and love; and inner peace; and success, in whatever way that means to us.

So what is a new image that you would like to hold? What is a new image of abundance? What is a new image for you of peace or joy?

That we have an unlimited ability to create greater possibilities. But it is to make sure that we are creating things that are positive; things that are abundant. And not things that are negative, and not things that are lack-based.

If we look in areas of our lives, and we are repeating some of the same things, it's because we keep worshipping at those to the point that we keep attracting it more and more. And we can attract and create new stuff if we're willing to use the power of our imagination and our minds to create new and positive images.

The fact is: we all want a better life. We all want a happier life; a more peaceful life; a more prosperous life in some way. And the fact is: we don't need to keep living in bondage. We don't need to keep creating experiences of lack and limitation and negativity.

Jesus said this. He said, "You will know the Truth and the truth will set you free."

The first commandment is the Truth that sets us free. To know that God is your source. To focus your heart and your mind on God -- seeking God, sincerely trusting God, delighting in God -- which will open up all the channels of God's abundance to flow freely in and through our lives.

And the second Truth is to make no graven images or idols. You have access to the abundance and the unlimited goodness of God! Use your power wisely. Use it constructively. Use it creatively to create the life that you desire.

God wants to uplift us, so it's important that we don't bring ourselves down. You know, don't use our mind on graven images. Let's use it on abundant good by knowing and cultivating the Truth that God is our source.

God bless you all.

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