

Advent 2022

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS HELP US SEE
SPECIFIC WAYS WE HAVE FAILED TO LOVE
GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOR.

DEC I: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The First and Second Commandments: "I Am the LORD Your God Who Brought You Out of Bondage You Shall Have No Other Gods But Me. You Shall Not Make For Yourself Any Idol."

What has taken on undue importance in my life, in ways that distress me?

Have I placed other material goals ahead of living out my love of God?

When I am making decisions, how important is considering and doing the will of God, as opposed to other factors? What other considerations take priority in my decision-making?



DEC 2: THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

The Third Commandment: "You Shall Not Invoke With Malice the Name of God."

Have I used God to justify exploitation or unjust acts?

In speaking and communicating about God, faith, or theology, have I been careless of the feelings of others or the effects my words have on them?

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DEC 3: THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

The Fourth Commandment: "Remember the Sabbath Day and Keep It Holy."

Have I been faithful to my own commitments about prayer, church attendance, or taking time to rest, whatever those commitments may be?

Have I valorized work at the expense of rest? Do I judge others for not working hard enough? Do I associate my own value with how much I accomplish?



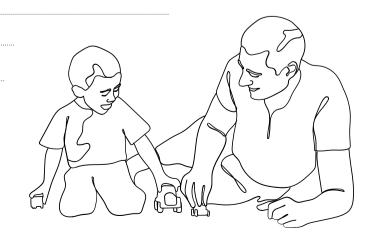
DEC 4: THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

The Fifth Commandment: "Honor Your Parents."

It is important to note this is NEVER meant to justify accepting harmful behavior from family members. Instead, it's a way to consider how we maintain healthy relationships with those we are close to.

How have I sinned against those with whom I have the closest relationships, including family members such as parents, spouse, or children?

Have I failed to set appropriate boundaries and care for myself in my relationships with relatives (or friends)?



DEC 5: THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

The Sixth Commandment: "You Shall Not Murder."

Have I done material harm or violence to others, through my own actions or through inaction in the face of injustice?

Have I wished harm on others, in my own anger or thoughts?

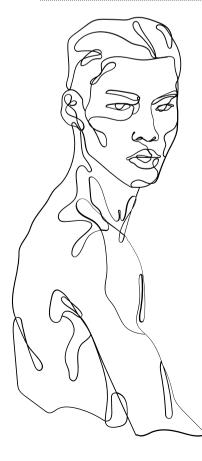
Have I spoken in ways that hurt others?



DEC 6: THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

The Seventh Commandment: "You Shall Not Commit Adultery."

Have I betrayed trust placed in me in intimate relationships?



DEC 7: THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

The Eighth Commandment: "You Shall Not Steal."

Have I taken or obtained anything that rightly belongs to another, through my own actions or through inaction in the face of unjust systems?

DEC 8: THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

The Ninth Commandment: "You Shall Not Bear False Witness."

Have I told untrue statements about others? Have I lied for my own personal benefit?

Have I gossiped or shared private stories about others that were told to me in confidence? Have I shared things about others that would cause them embarrassment or shame?



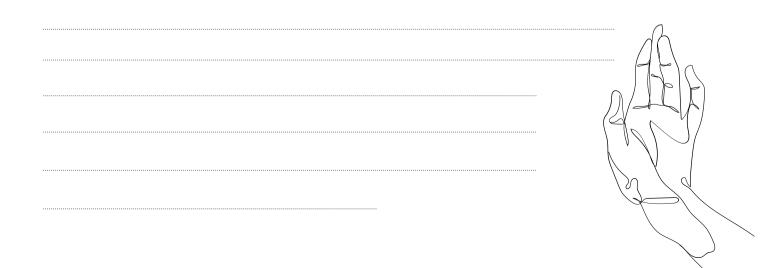
DEC 9: THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

The Tenth Commandment: "You Shall Not Covet Anything That Belongs to Your Neighbor."

Have I desired more from others than they could rightly give me? Have I disrespected or refused to accept anyone's boundaries around their time, emotions, or engagement?

Have I sought influence over others' actions through manipulation?

How have I been self-centered in my dealings with others? How have I treated them in light of what I want from them, rather than considering their needs?



THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS ARE ANOTHER
TRADITIONAL STRUCTURE FOR NAMING THE
ROOTS OF SIN IN OUR LIVES.

DEC 10: PRIDE

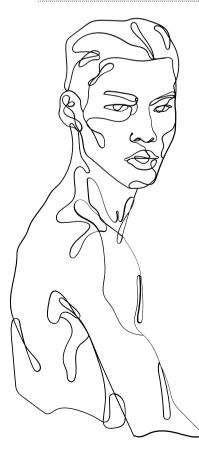
The First Deadly Sin: Pride

Have I been judgmental of others or considered myself better than them?



The Second Deadly Sin: Envy

Have I been envious of material or social success that others have, in ways that direct me toward resentment rather than solidarity?



Have I been envious of the time or attention that people in my life give to others rather than me?

DEC 12: WRATH

The Third Deadly Sin: Wrath

Have I been angry in ways that direct me toward destructive desires rather than solidarity?

How have I engaged in anger in ways that distress or harmed me, or that distress or harmed those around me?

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DEC 13: LUST

The Fourth Deadly Sin: Lust

The sin of lust can be a sensitive topic because it has been used to cause great shame regarding sexuality. However, it can be a lens for considering whether the ways we engage with sexuality are healthy for us and others.

Have I abused, exploited, or harmed others sexually?

Have I ignored or transgressed the sexual boundaries of others?

DEC 14: GLUTTONY

The Fifth Deadly Sin: Gluttony

This is a sensitive topic because it has been used to support fatphobia and disordered eating. A better interpretation of this aspect of sin might be "being out of balance with my own needs and the needs of the community."

Is my relationship with food healthy and safe for me?

Is my relationship with drugs, alcohol, and other substances healthy for me and in line with my own values?

How do I consider the environmental impacts of my diet and lifestyle?

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DEC 15: GREED

The Sixth Deadly Sin: Greed

How have I failed to be generous to others in need? Have I compromised my own values in order to seek wealth?



DEC 16: SLOTH

The Seventh Deadly Sin: Sloth

The word for sloth, "acedia," does not only mean intentional laziness but also apathy.

Where have I failed to act when action for justice was needed, either out of selfishness or laziness, or because action and caring for others felt impossible or pointless?

THE O ANTIPHONS

THE O ANTIPHONS ARE TRADITIONAL TEXTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LAST SEVEN DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS EVE. THEY ARE FAMILIAR AS THE VERSES OF "O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL." THEY PROVIDE SEVEN DIFFERENT TITLES FOR GOD WHICH OFFER ANOTHER WAY TO REFLECT ON OUR RELATIONSHIPS TO GOD.

DEC 17: O WISDOM FROM ON HIGH

How have I been careless or thoughtless in my communications with others?

Have I sought wisdom, through prayer or talking to trusted friends, in making decisions? Have I hastily or carelessly made decisions I regret?



DEC 18: O LORD OF MIGHT

The "Lord on Sinai's height who gave the Law" reminds us of the close connections between Judaism and Christianity, which are often denied or lost in Christian thought. Where has my own thinking about faith fallen into anti-Judaism (for example, in contrasting Jesus with the ethics of other first-century Jews, or in denigrating the Mosaic Law as irrelevant)?

DEC 19: O ROOT OF JESSE

How faithful have I been to the spiritual practices that keep me feeling rooted and grounded in God? To borrow language from Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg, have I failed to keep the spiritual commitments I have made with integrity?

DEC. 20: O KEY OF DAVID

What are the places where I feel stuck? What are situations or habits that from which I want to be unbound?

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DEC 21: O DAYSPRING

Where have I despaired over the state of the world, or denied the hope and possibility of change that come with God?

Where have I accepted the status quo as inevitable, rather than seeking justice and peace that seem impossible right now?



DEC. 22: O KING OF NATIONS

The antiphon calling Christ "King of the Nations" (Gentiles) reminds us of the call to universal healing reiterated in Christianity. This is a time to turn examination to our relationships with strangers and neighbors with whom we do not have close ties:

Where have I failed to help those in need? Where have I let fear of those unlike me prevent me from love?



DEC 23: O EMMANUEL

The hymn "Away in a Manger" asks that the "child of Bethlehem be born in us today". What else is heavy on your heart that you want to speak to God to prepare your heart for Emmanuel, God-With-Us, to dwell in it?

DEC 24: THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

How have I failed to love God with my whole heart and mind and soul and strength?

How have I failed to love my neighbor as myself?

