

Combating Lawlessness in America

A message from Stephen McDowell

America is becoming a lawless nation. While the number of individual law-breakers has been increasing, it is not just criminals who are lawless. It is also those we elect to uphold the law.

The words of President Obama while visiting my home town of Charlottesville last month sum up the thinking of many of our government leaders: “That’s a good thing about being President. I can do whatever I want.”

While the context was breaking protocol while visiting Monticello, he nonetheless has displayed this thinking in many ways: he has unilaterally changed the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) at least 24 times, his administration has threatened businesses that speak out against Obamacare, and he has made judicial appointments without Congress being in recess. In addition, he has allowed the IRS to target certain political groups without taking any action to rectify this abusive and unlawful act.

And it is not just the President. Many other leaders ignore the law (even those they approved) and the Constitution, and have become a law unto themselves. Judges regularly make law — like the U.S. District Judge in Texas who toppled a marriage amendment upholding the traditional and Biblical view of marriage that had been approved by more than 75% of the voters in that state. Similar federal rulings have discarded marriage laws in Oklahoma, Virginia, California, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, and Kentucky.

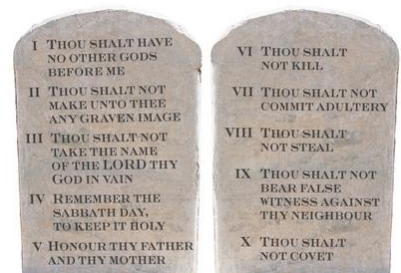
Twelve days after Virginia’s Attorney General Mark Herring took an oath to uphold the Constitution of Virginia, he said he would not enforce the marriage definition provision in the Constitution and would, in fact, work against it. He, in essence, declared he would be the source of the law. Other Attorneys General have done likewise, and in February 2014 the U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder declared that state AGs are not obligated to defend laws with which they disagree.

Regarding discussion on immigration reform Thomas Sowell writes: “Immigration laws are the only laws that are discussed in terms of how to help people who break them. One of the big problems that those who are pushing ‘comprehensive immigration reform’ want solved is how to help people who came here illegally and are now ‘living in the shadows’ as a result.”

Add to this, government agencies that run rough-shod over the rights of individual citizens and the failure of Congress to perform its legal duties, and we can see we have a serious problem.

But why is this happening?

One primary reason that we are becoming a lawless society is that the church (both as an institution and the corporate body of believers) has become lawless. The church has disregarded all uses of God’s basic moral laws as revealed in the Ten Commandments: for civil use as a curb against sinful action in society, for didactic use as the rule by which we should govern our lives and grow to maturity, and in many ways for theological use as a mirror that serves as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.



The Ten Commandments formed the foundation of American law and society. Rejecting His moral law has led to lawlessness today.

For over three centuries the Ten Commandments were ubiquitous in America.

- The Ten Commandments were taught in all the churches and hung on church walls of many denominations.
- Christian leaders followed the example of Protestant reformers like Luther, Calvin, and Knox and systematically taught the Ten Commandments.
- Catechisms were the primary textbooks in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Ten Commandments were central in these catechisms; for example, about 40% of the questions in the Westminster Shorter Catechism deal with the Ten Commandments.
- The *New England Primer*, the best selling text during the 1700s with about 5 million sold, contained the Shorter Catechism. Almost all of our Founding Fathers, even the minority who were not Christians, would have used this book and memorized the catechism. Therefore, even the non-believers were thoroughly grounded in the moral law of God.
- Webster's "Blue-Back Speller" sold about 100 million copies in the 19th century. Over 100 sentences used to introduce new words taught the moral law of God contained in all ten of the commandments.
- The *McGuffey Readers*, which sold 122 million copies, had a section on the Ten Commandments.
- Other textbooks would have likewise taught the moral law of God. In fact, the Ten Commandments hung on many schoolroom walls up until 1980 when the Supreme Court ruled this was unconstitutional.
- The Ten Commandments were the foundation of civil law in America:
 - a. The first laws written in the colonies, *Lawes Divine, Morall and Martiall, etc.*, were written in Virginia 1609-12 and contain most of the Ten Commandments.
 - b. The laws of the New Haven Colony, founded by John Davenport in 1638, state: "the judicial laws of God, as they were delivered by Moses and expounded in other parts of Scripture, so far as they are a defence to the moral law, and neither typical nor ceremonial nor had reference to Canaan, shall be accounted of moral and binding equity and force."
 - c. *Massachusetts Body of Liberties*: the standard for this precursor to the Bill of Rights was the Word of God.
 - d. The rights and liberties of the Ten Commandments are preserved in all our early civil documents, including the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.
 - e. Recognizing the Ten Commandments as the foundation of our laws is why many state capitols have plaques of the Ten Commandments.
- The basis of America's legal system was built upon the Biblical view of law as taught by William Blackstone and others. For this reason many courtrooms had the Ten Commandments hanging upon the walls, until recent times.



The Ten Commandments at the Texas Capitol



Commandments at a Pennsylvania school

While the Ten Commandments were found everywhere in our nation in the past, they have come under assault in recent times: in 1980 the Supreme Court ruled they could not be hung on the schoolroom walls in Kentucky; Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore was removed from office after he refused to remove the Ten Commandments from the courthouse; laws are passed and judicial opinions issued that are contrary to the moral law of God.

However, the reason the commandments were removed from the schoolroom and courtroom walls is because they were first removed from the church walls and the walls of the hearts of Christians. Not that keeping the commandments is the means of our salvation (for salvation is a gift of God, given by His grace and a result of our faith in the atoning work of Christ), but, His moral law is to be the standard for right behavior within our society. Without this, we can have little liberty, justice, peace, or Biblical prosperity. The Bible teaches myriads of times that great blessings come from obeying His law-word.

Yet, if we do not know His commandments and how they apply to all of life, we cannot obtain the good fruit that comes from obeying them. Most Americans and, sadly, most American Christians, are ignorant of God's moral law. In the fall of 1997, a friend of mine took a survey of 500 men attending the Promise Keepers prayer gathering in Washington, DC, asking them to name the Ten Commandments in the order they appeared in their Bible. Only **one** of these sincere and devoted believers could do so! I have taken numerous surveys of people attending our seminars asking the same question. Only a small percentage of them have been able to list the commandments in order, and there has never been a majority of attendees who could list all ten even in random order.



The Ten Commandments at the Oklahoma Capitol

New Study Resources on the Ten Commandments

Ignorance of God's moral law, which has led to great lawlessness in America today, has prompted me to put together some resources to help. I am currently working on two items: one is a Bible study on the Ten Commandments designed to be used by parents in the home, by churches, by Christian and home schools, and by civil leaders and anyone else needing an understanding of the moral law that formed the foundation of Western Civilization.

This Ten Commandments Bible study will guide you through both the prohibitive nature of the commands and the positive corollaries and rights rooted in these commands. The format is primarily to ask questions regarding the Commandments and then give Scriptures for you to look up and write out the answers. When completed, you will have a thorough understanding of the marvelous principles contained in the Commandments.

The second resource is a book on the Ten Commandments which will trace their use in American history as well as teach the personal and societal principles contained therein. I will explore how the Commandments formed the foundation of our civil law, how they were an important part of our education, and how they shaped the moral lifestyle of all Americans. I will explore why we need the Commandments today and how to apply them in our personal life, as well as in our families, churches, and nation. This book can be used in conjunction with the Bible study for deeper understanding (and will be a great resource for someone teaching this study), though the Bible study will stand by itself.



God delivered His commandments to Moses but He also wrote them upon the conscience of all men.

Please consider supporting the Ten Commandments projects with a generous gift. For those contributing \$100 or more today, we will send you a copy of the *Ten Commandments Bible Study* book when it is completed (scheduled to be released in June) and also the book, whose working title and subtitle is: *The Ten Commandments: Blueprint for Building Men and Nations. Why America Is Becoming a Lawless Nation and What You Can Do About It* (available in the fall).

The material in these two books is essential for American Christians to know and apply if we hope to turn the nation from a path of lawlessness to one following after God and His truth. America needs to repent (turn and go a different way) for many things. Most importantly, we need to turn from man's law to God's law. We need to once again acknowledge God as sovereign, the source of law (the First Commandment) and return to His moral law as revealed in the Ten Commandments. Your support is vital in helping us produce these books and teach others.

Please donate today (donate online at providencefoundation.com)

Thank you for joining with us.