

October 20, 2024

Identity: Relationships

Each year, when Don and I took youth on mission service trips, we had only one rule: respect. This single rule covered everything from the way we interacted with people in the community to the way we honored lights out or refrained from trashing the van. Respect is more than an attitude; it's an action that holds relationships together. "Show proper respect to everyone," Paul instructed in 1 Peter 2:17 (NIV). Show respect. Speak with respect. Act respectfully. This is how to build and strengthen a cohesive and safe society.

As the Israelites made their 40-year trip to the Promised Land, God gave them ten rules for how to live together as God's people. In Greek, these Ten Commandments were called "the Decalogue" (*deka logoi*, meaning "ten words"). But in many ways, the Ten Commandments can be summarized with one single word: respect.

The first half of the Ten Commandments focuses on respect for God (Deuteronomy 5:6-15). Respect God's holiness and the day set aside for worshiping God. Value and treasure God's loyalty and love. Honor God's name.

The second half of the commandments focuses on respect for other people (verses 16-21): Respect your parents. Value them as the ones who brought you into the world and for the way they provided for you. Respect other people's right to exist. Human life is sacred. Respect your commitments as well as the vows other people make. Be faithful to those you love, as God is faithful to you. Respect other peoples' possessions and their property rights. Don't take anything that belongs to another person. Respect other people by telling the truth. Telling lies makes authentic communication impossible and devalues the other person. Respect your neighbor by being happy for your neighbor's good fortune and accomplishments. Jealousy diminishes our ability to appreciate the good things in our lives. Respect yourself by being grateful for who you are and the blessings you have.

1. How do the Ten Commandments inform your relationship with God? with others?
2. What actions can you take to build respect with others?
3. How do the relationships in your life help shape your identity?

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