

“Owning But One God”

INTRODUCTION: On July 19, 2015, the *Charlotte Observer* ran an article in its *Insight* section of the Sunday newspaper...

1. *‘Nones’ Changing Bible Belt* – the share of young people with “None” as a religious affiliation is growing and the church in America is shrinking.
 - a. South Carolina: 10% (2007) to 19% (2014)
 - b. North Carolina: 12% (2007) to 20% (2014)
2. One of the young people interviewed in the article was a **Nunzio Cimino** of Kannapolis (age 24)

Nunzio Cimino of Kannapolis grew up Southern Baptist, but going to church is no longer on his to-do list for Sundays. It’s now a day to tend to his garden, do yoga and, on a recent Sunday, drive to Charlotte to hang with friends at the Common Market, a store/deli/bar in Plaza Midwood that draws more young adults these days than many churches do.

Over drinks on the patio, Cimino, 24, explained that he rejected the doctrines and the do’s and don’ts of organized religion “as I developed my own mind,” and now finds meaning not in a church pew, but in the outdoors.
3. Other young “Nones” agree with Nunzio: They don’t like the Christian emphasis on *rules*:
 - a. **Joshua Berridge**, age 24, said he didn’t get much from the church morally:

Berridge of Cornelius said he believes there may be “something” out there in the universe and allows that Jesus “may have been a really awesome guy who said all that stuff.” But the computer engineer added that he’s been turned off by houses of worship, which seem quick to condemn and routinely cherry-pick passages from their own sacred books.

“I don’t feel a strong pull toward any certain religion,” he said, echoing many in his generation. “They don’t seem to offer as much morally or ethically as I can teach myself.”
 - b. His friend, **Erika Cox**, age 27 agrees...

Cox of Rowan County said she doesn’t believe “in a god or a higher power. I only believe what I can see, basically...I believe in science.”
4. And even their millennial peers who do attend church feel somewhat the same way; that church can be rule-oriented and condemning. **Genevieve Walls**, age 25, goes to Elevation Church. She commented...

What really drew me was how they didn’t expect people to be perfect and they weren’t condemning. They understand that everybody goes through things, everyone has past mistakes. They understand that God has a plan for everybody and the best is ahead of us.
5. Are the “Nones” correct? Is Christianity too rule-oriented? Do evangelical churches condemn too much or too quickly? Can a person learn more morally or ethically by himself rather than a church? Does God expect people to be perfect?
6. Well...here’s what God says in His answer to these questions.

- a. Does God expect us to be perfect?
- i. *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.*
(1 Peter 1:14-17)
 - ii. *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* (Matthew 5:48)
- b. Does God realize that people make mistakes and sin?
- i. *Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.
For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.* (Psalm 103:1-4, 8-14)
 - ii. *If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness,
that you may be feared.* (Psalm 130:3-4)
- c. Does God condemn people for what they do?
- i. *The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."* (Exodus 34:6-7)

- ii. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)*
- d. Does God have a lot of rules we need to keep?
 - i. *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:8-10)*
 - ii. *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)*
 - iii. *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:14)*
 - iv. *Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully. (I Timothy 1:8)*

7. **Behind these statements** of the Millennials and the Nones is a probing question: *Does God have a set of expectations by which He measures my lifestyle?*

8. And the answer is "Yes!" This is *not* a popular answer; it is *not* what people want to hear; and it is *not* a way Americans intend to live. *But* it is true: *God expects all people to live an ethical, moral, religious and civic life by His standards...*

And God spoke all these words, saying,

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

"You shall have no other gods before me.

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

"You shall not murder.

"You shall not commit adultery.

"You shall not steal.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

“You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.” (Exodus 20:1-17)

9. **What we fail to see is this:** That God gave us these Ten Commandments for our good, not for His.
 - a. *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.* (1 John 5:1-3)
 - b. **Catch this:** *“...for this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.”*
 - c. How so? Because the Ten Commandments
 - i. Show us how to love God (laws 1-5) and how much God loves us
 - ii. How to love our neighbor and how God loves all men (laws 6-10)
 - d. *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Galatians 5:14)
 - e. *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* (Romans 13:10)
 - f. *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.* (John 15:9-11)
 - g. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. (John 14:15)
 - h. *And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”* (Matthew 22:37-40)
10. We are studying the *Three Formulae*: Creed, commandments, Lord's Prayer (baptism), The Basics of the Christian faith and life.
 - a. *The Three Formulae* is shared by Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches. (catechism)
 - b. *Apostles' Creed*: Fundamentals/essentials of our faith
 - c. *Baptism*: Our identity in Christ and entrance into the church
 - d. *Lord's Prayer*: How we relate to God (piety, prayer, priorities)
 - e. **The Ten Commandments**: How we live (morals & ethics)
 - f. Hence, the Ten Commandments are theologically called *the Moral Law*.
11. Over these next ten weeks, I want to examine each of these Ten Commandments and show how in each one...
 - a. The Nature of God is reflected
 - b. The Love of God is shown to us
 - c. How we can learn to love through the commandments

12. We begin with **Exodus 20:1-3**

- a. Commandment #1 – “*You shall have no other gods before me*”
- b. To understand this law, please turn to First Corinthians 8:1-6 and 10:1-22.

I. THE NATURE OF GOD: GOD IS UNIQUELY REAL AND TRUE (1 Corinthians 8:1-6)

Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1 Corinthians 8:1-6)

1. **John Calvin** gave a complete and balanced explanation of the *Moral Law* (Ten Commandments) in his *magnum opus*: The four book *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
 - a. Book One: *The Knowledge of God the Creator*
 - b. Book Two: *The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, First Disclosed to the Fathers Under the Law and Then to Us in the Gospel.*
 - c. Book Two, chapter seven: *The Moral Law*
2. Calvin first presented the idea that the Law of God had **three uses** (purposes).
3. The **first use** of the law was *pedagogical, tutorial or evangelistic...*
 - a. The law was given to lead us to Christ.
 - b. *Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.*

Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. (Galatians 3:19-24)
 - a. **Key:** The law teaches us our need for Jesus Christ

Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. (Galatians 3:24 NASB)
 - b. **John Calvin:** *Institutes: Book 2; ch. 7, sec. 6; p. 354.*

In the precepts of the law, God is but the rewarder of perfect righteousness, which all of us lack, and conversely, the severe judge of evil deeds. But in Christ his face shines, full of grace and gentleness, even upon us poor and unworthy sinners.

- c. **St. Augustine** put the same truth in these words (*Institutes; Book 2, Ch. 7, sec. 9, pg. 351*).
- The law bids us, as we try to fulfill its requirements, and become wearied in our weakness under it, to know how to ask the help of grace. The usefulness of the law lies in convicting man of his infirmity and moving him to call upon the remedy of grace which is in Christ. God commands what we cannot do that we may know what we ought to seek from him. The law was given for this purpose: to make you, being great, little; to show that you do not have in yourself the strength to attain righteousness, and for you, thus helpless, unworthy, and destitute, to flee to grace.*
- d. In other words: *The commandments show me how unrighteous I really am, how much I sin and how I cannot earn God's favor; thus they teach me my need for grace, and a tutor, drive me to Christ for salvation.*
- e. *What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. (Romans 7:7-12)*
4. Paul speaks about this *dynamic of the law* with reference to the first commandment in First Corinthians 8:1-6.
- a. *And God spoke all these words, saying,*
- "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:1-3)*
- b. But we, in our sinful state, think we know all about God and yet we worship many *false gods*.
- c. *Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.*
- Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"— (1 Corinthians 8:1-5)*
- d. **Key statement:** *"indeed there are many gods and many lords"*
- For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"— (1 Corinthians 8:5)*
- e. Once we come to Christ, we realize that these idols, false gods, were not real.

- i. *Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.”* (1 Corinthians 8:4)
 - ii. **“an idol has no real existence”**
 - f. We come to realize that there is really only one God and one Lord.
 - i. *Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.* (1 Corinthians 8:6)
 - ii. *One God:* The Triune God; God the Father
 - iii. *One Lord:* Jesus Christ our Lord
 - g. Through God and Christ *are all things.* (creator)
 - h. For God and Christ *we exist.* (Lord)
5. Here is what the **First Commandment** tells us...
- a. *And God spoke all these words, saying,*
 - “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*
 - “You shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:1-3)*
 - b. The Triune God of the Bible is the One who made Israel, loved Israel, and brought Israel out of Egyptian slavery in a mighty act of deliverance.
 - c. – The parting of the Red Sea!

Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” (Exodus 3:7-10)

And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

The LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.” (Exodus 14:13-18)

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of

Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. (Exodus 14:21-22)

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses. (Exodus 14:30-31)

6. **Commandment #1** tells us four things –

- a. God loves us and saves us.
- b. God has delivered us from slavery to sin.
- c. God is real, and His mighty acts prove this.
- d. All other gods (idols) are false, impotent, and not able to love us.

7. You (and I) have many gods (goddesses) in our hearts!

8. **John Calvin:** *Institutes: Book 1, chapter 11, section 8, p. 108.*

When he relates that Rachel stole her father's idols (Genesis 31:10), he is speaking of a vice that was common. From this we may gather that man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols. Man's mind, full as it is of pride and boldness, dares to imagine a god according to its own capacity; as it sluggishly plods, indeed is overwhelmed with the crassest ignorance, it conceives an unreality and an empty appearance as God. To these evils a new wickedness joins itself, that man tries to express in his work the sort of God he has inwardly conceived. Therefore the mind begets an idol; the hand gives it birth.

9. Idols come in **four models:** deities, spirits, forces...

- a. A god who is not the God of the Bible: *Allah*, the thousands of gods and goddesses of *Hinduism*; polytheism, etc.
- b. Animism: The worship of spirits, often ancestors, who we believe do for us the things only God can do (*Shintoism*)
- c. Devotions of the heart (affections) which cause us to look for things to meet our needs, instead of God: *wealth, power, sex, education, fame, etc.*
- d. Reimagining of the God of the Bible and Jesus Christ

10. The first model deludes Muslims, Hindus.

11. The second model deceives Shintoists, tribal religions, and those who worship “saints.”

12. The third model seduces secular men with the love of money, power, fame, etc.

13. The **fourth model** affects **us** – Christians: *When we make God and Jesus into our image, rather than pursuing His image in us.*

- a. A God who did not create but used evolution
- b. A Jesus who approves of same-sex marriages or who won't condemn adultery or decry racism
- c. A God captured by republicans (or democrats)

- d. A Savior who always loves people and gives them permission to do whatever they like, but is not holy, opposed to evil or judgmental of sin
- e. *A God just like us is no god at all!*
- f. *These things you have done, and I have been silent;
you thought that I was one like yourself.
But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you. (Psalm 50:21)*

14. If you truly *love* someone, you are real with them, true to them, you reveal your secret self to them.

15. And so *God is with us*: He reveals the *reality* of His existence: He is the only, true and living God. All others are non-existent.

16. God is true with us: What we see is who God really is.

17. God reveals His secret self to us in the *incarnation* of Jesus Christ –

If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. (John 14:7-11)

18. The reality of the true, holy, living God drives us to **Jesus Christ**.

II. THE LOVE OF GOD: HE GUARDS US FROM SIN (1 Corinthians 10:1-13)

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:1-13)

1. **John Calvin** said that the second use of the *Moral Law* was...

- a. ...judicial, civil or political
- b. i.e., the law was given to restrain evil
- c. *Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. (1 Timothy 1:8-11)*

d. **John Calvin:**

The second function of the law is this: at least by fear of punishment to restrain certain men who are untouched by any care for what is just and right unless compelled by hearing the dire threats in the law. But they are restrained, not because their inner mind is stirred or affected, but because, being bridled, so to speak, they keep their hands from outward activity, and hold inside the depravity that otherwise they would wantonly have indulged. Consequently, they are neither better nor more righteous before God. Hindered by fright or shame, they dare neither execute what they have conceived in their minds, nor openly breathe forth the rage of their lust.

- 2. In other words, the Law of God is like a *policeman*: His very presence – uniform, gun, badge, police car, and gaze – makes us behave ourselves lest we be arrested, charged, fined, and imprisoned for our law-breaking.
- 3. In First Corinthians 10:1-13, Paul reminds us that...
 - a. Old Testament Israel, in the Exodus with Moses, were guilty of *five besetting sins*...
 - i. *Desiring evil things* (longing to return to Egypt)
 - ii. *Idolatry* (worshipping the golden calf)
 - iii. *Sexual immorality* (marrying pagan women in Moab)
 - iv. *Testing God* (doubting God's goodness and provision)
 - v. *Grumbling* (against Moses and their leaders)
 - b. Result: *Thousands of them died in the wilderness time and time again.*
 - c. **Key statement:** These events were lessons for us

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:11-13)
 - d. We are *prone* to these same sins, and therefore, we are subject to these same punishments!
- 4. When we hear the first commandment we should think of what God does to *idolaters*
 - a. And God spoke all these words, saying,

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

“You shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:1-3)

- b. He first *warns* them about their evil idolatry (as He did Pharaoh... 14 times!)
 - c. He then sends *remedial judgment*, as He did Pharaoh – 10 plagues
 - d. He continually *calls us to repentance and faith* by showing us who He is (in Christ), as He did to Pharaoh.
 - e. Finally, He *destroys* idolators in hell, as He destroyed Pharaoh in the Red Sea.
5. Does God do this because He’s “mean”? NO! He does this because He loves us and wants to keep us away from evil, which will necessitate His judgment.

Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? (Ezekiel 18:23)

“And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?’ Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 33:10-11)

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)

God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.” (Acts 3:26)

6. The Law of God is meant to *scare* us. Even *intimidate* us. To keep us from sins, so that we enter not into God’s judgment.
7. The *First Commandment* warns us that there is...
- a. Only one God
 - b. There should be no other god before God
 - c. Idolatry is a great evil and will be punished
 - d. *But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)*

III. THE WAYS OF GOD: GOD WILL TEACH US HOW TO LOVE (1 Corinthians 10:14-22)

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it

not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? (1 Corinthians 10:14-22)

1. Here is the third use of the law: *didactic, normative, guiding* use of the law.

- a. i.e., to teach us how to love God and others
- b. a *moral guide* to godly love and Christ-like living
- c. *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* (Romans 13:8-10)
- d. **John Calvin:** *Institutes: Book 2, chapter 7, sec. 12, p. 360.*

The third and principal use, which pertains more closely to the proper purpose of the law, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns. For even though they have the law written and engraved upon their hearts by the finger of God, that is, have been so moved and quickened through the directing of the Spirit that they long to obey God, they still profit by the law in two ways. Here is the best instrument for them to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord's will to which they aspire, and to confirm them in the understanding of it. Again, because we need not only teaching but also exhortation, the servant of God will also avail himself of this benefit of the law: by frequent meditation upon it to be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression.

2. Love is the fulfillment of the law; the moral law is all about love: loving God and loving your neighbor.

3. **The beginning** of a love for God is to own God (Christ) as your *only* God.

4. In First Corinthians 10:14-22, Paul tells us that behind all idols is some *demon*.

- a. *What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.* (1 Corinthians 10:19-20)
- b. Idolatry is the love of demons: the worship of Satan
- c. It leads to evil, hate and death.

5. Paul makes it clear: *We cannot love God and demons at the same time...*

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? (1 Corinthians 10:21-22)

6. Jesus put it this way: *You can only love and serve one God at a time. Never two...*

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Matthew 6:24)

7. God is the husband to old Israel as Jesus is the bridegroom of the New Testament church: *He will not tolerate spiritual adultery.*
 - a. Either we love Him with a singular love
 - b. Or we love demons instead (our pet idols)
 - c. But we cannot love both
8. When God says...
 - a. *“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. “You shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:1-3)*
 - b. He is calling all believers to a singular love
 - c. Like a jealous husband, He brokes no competition!
 - d. *I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:1-3)*
9. Which one of you would entertain the idea of a *polygamous marriage* – sharing your spouse with multiple others?
10. And yet, this is how we often treat God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION: Here we come to the *first law (principle)* of the Christian way of life...

1. Who lies at the center of your lives? Who is the love of our life?
2. The only right answer is: God
3. Those young Millennials down at the *Common Market in Plaza Midwood*, drinking coffee with friends, and saying they have “none” when it comes to God...
4. I ask them: *Who loves you so much that He created you and gave you the gift of life? Who guards you from evil and puts those “rules” you so hate all around you to keep you from self-destruction (or hurting others)? Who sent His only Son to die for all the times you neglected God, broke His laws, or loved another idol more than you love Him?*
5. Answer: *God...*
And God spoke all these words, saying,
“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
“You shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:1-3)

6. Tell me...honestly: Have you seen your great need for Jesus Christ this morning? Is there a healthy fear in you that God will someday judge you for your sins? Would you like to begin the life-long process of learning how to love God, follow Jesus, and care for others?
7. Then here is the place – the only place – to begin: *You must turn from your sin (law-breaking), believe in the One, True God, and surrender to Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.*

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3)

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:4)

8. **This is the beginning of the Christian way of life** – *“I am the Lord your God, the only true God, who brought you out of the land of self, out of the bondage of sin. You shall have no other God but Me, for you have no other Redeemer than My Son, Jesus Christ. Believe in Jesus, love God, and you will live!”*