

A Child-Friendly Examination of Conscience

Although young children rarely commit serious sins, it's important to teach them how to judge their actions and determine where they need to grow in love for God or others. Because children this age are concrete thinkers and are interested in rules, the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:6-21) can provide a useful framework for helping them form and examine their consciences. The following is a child-friendly version of the Ten Commandments and related questions that can be used as an examination of conscience. For adults, the meaning of each of the Ten Commandments is discussed in detail in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (see nos. 2052-2557).

1. "You shall have no other gods before me" (v. 7): Make God the most important thing in your life. Have I put God first, or have I sometimes made other things in my life more important than God? Do I remember to talk to Him? Do I choose what God wants for me over what I want for myself?

2. "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain" (v. 11): Use God's name the right way. Have I used God's name with care? Have I used God's name in the wrong way? (For example, saying "God" when I wasn't really talking to Him or talking about Him.)

3. "Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (v. 12): Make Sunday a day to worship God. Have I tried my best to worship God at Mass by singing, praying, and listening? Have I misbehaved during Mass?

4. "Honor your father and your mother" (v. 16): Love your parents and follow their rules. Have I obeyed my parents — even when they are not looking? Have I talked back to them?

5. "You shall not kill" (v. 17): Be kind to the people and animals God made. Have I been kind to others? Have I solved disagreements in a peaceful way? Have I fought with anyone? Have I taken good care of my pets?

6. "Neither shall you commit adultery" (v. 18): Be respectful in the things you do with your body. Have I followed God's rules in how I treat my body? Do I respect the bodies of others?

7. "Neither shall you steal" (v. 19): Take care of other people's things; don't take what belongs to someone else. Have I respected other peoples' things? Have I taken something that doesn't belong to me?

8. "Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor" (v. 20): Tell the truth. Have I told the truth? Have I told a lie or things that were only partly true?

9. "Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife" (v. 21a): Keep your thoughts and words clean. Have I told or listened to any dirty jokes? Have I watched any movies or shows that I shouldn't have seen? Have I tried to keep my mind on good things?

10. "You shall not desire . . . anything that is your neighbor's" (v. 21b): Be happy with the things you have. Have I been happy with the things I have? Have I been jealous of others?



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