

How Liberty Works

An Excerpt from “The Key to Freedom and Liberty, Part 1”

The complete article is available at <https://bit.ly/3PsuF60>.

Law and Liberty

How is it that following God’s law gives a person freedom? Consider this. As Christians, we tend to think of the Ten Commandments as being a set of laws that we as *individuals* are obligated to obey, and certainly they are, for each one of us is accountable to the God who gave His laws to us. Having come from God, His commands “are absolute,” writes Dennis Prager. They “stand in direct opposition to all relativistic approaches to morality — the notion that each individual or society determines what is right or wrong.”¹

It is a commendable thing when *one person* obeys the laws of God, but think carefully how liberating it is on a corporate or national level when a *society* reverts and obeys them. Let’s think first about this in relation to the last five of the Ten Commandments. If my neighbor will

- obey the Sixth Commandment and refrain from killing me,
- obey the Seventh Commandment and respect my marriage relationship to my wife,
- obey the Eighth Commandment and not steal from me or my family,
- obey the Ninth Commandment and not lie about me, and
- obey the Tenth Commandment and not inappropriately desire what isn’t his, then

my rights to life, security in my marriage, property, a decent reputation (assuming I have earned it), and respect for my ownership of what belongs to me — all these rights — are protected, at least as far as my relationship with my neighbor is concerned.

Now, suppose *all* the members of my neighborhood respect and obey these commands. Suppose the citizens of the larger community do. Aren’t all of us freer and safer because of the mutual respect we have for one another’s rights — and the reverence we have for God?

When an individual departs from this respect and seeks to violate one or more of my rights, it is then

the government’s responsibility to motivate that person to back off. This is why, in the Declaration of Independence, the Founders declared,

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

In light of this statement, it should be obvious that it’s also the government’s responsibility to respect my rights as far as it is concerned. It should create and maintain to the greatest degree possible unhindered environment for me to exercise my God-given rights.

Moving on, think of the Fifth Commandment, the one about honoring one’s parents; and the first four commandments as well, those about honoring God. If there were widespread respect for these “first authorities” in people’s lives, would there not also be widespread respect for other legitimate authorities as well, and greater order in society at large? How many instances of violence and property damage would never have occurred during the past year?

A Founding — and Foundational — Principle

The Ten Commandments, you see, aren’t nearly as confining or as restrictive as they are liberating, especially if they are honored and obeyed on a societal level. The Founding Fathers of the United States of America understood this. How do we know? Because just before mentioning “unalienable rights” in the Declaration of Independence and indicating those rights existed because people were “endowed [them] by their Creator,” they wrote of “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.” And yes, Founders believed these laws were absolute — neither relative nor subject to change.

¹Dennis Prager, *Exodus: God, Slavery, and Freedom — The Rational Bible*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Faith, 2018), 220, 221.