



10 Commandments E16 Q+R Transcript: How Does the 6th Commandment Apply to Killing in Military Combat?

Speakers:

Hosts: Jon Collins and Tim Mackie

Guests: Khuliso, Janice, Lucas, Leanne, Kyle, and Jacob

[Intro (0:00-1:23)]

[BibleProject theme fades in]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hey, Jon. Hello.

Jon: Hello. We wrapped up the 10 Commandments series.

Tim: Mhm. AKA, the Ten Words.

Jon: The Ten Words.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And we're going to do a question and response episode—

Tim: Mhm. Yep.

Jon: —and hear what people are thinking about—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: —and respond.

Tim: Turns out, there are lots of prickly, complicated, nuanced questions and rabbit holes that we danced around.

[Jon laughs]

[BibleProject theme fades out]

Tim: And some of which, you know, I knew, or you knew. You can only say so much. You can't say everything all the time. Others, I just—didn't even occur to me. So I'm so glad to hear all of y'all's questions to help us think more honestly. I—maybe just after—just because I spent the morning kind of sorting [laughs] through the questions—there were a lot, like over a hundred, and—Jon and I love to talk about the Bible and meditate on it together [laughs] and share our learnings with you all. Many of the questions, you know, raised by the 10 Commandments—they're complicated. And we're not going to, like, solve any issues for anybody, but we'll definitely do our best to be honest and try and name: What are the issues involved as we meditate on the deep moral and human God-centered implications of all of these questions? So that's my way of preface.

Jon: All right.

Tim: Let's just dive in.

[How Do the 10 Commandments Stand Apart From Other Ancient Near Eastern Law Codes? (1:23-10:50)]

Tim: First question is from Khuliso, from Johannesburg, South Africa. And this is kind of a context-setting question about where the commands in the Hebrew Bible came from in the first place.

Khuliso: Hi, Tim and Jon. My name is Khuliso, from Johannesburg, South Africa. Thanks very much for this podcast series. It's a really fascinating one as it comes at an interesting time for me, as my church community has been camped in this sermon series in the book of Exodus. One of the things that I've been personally thinking

through is the perspective from other biblical scholars, commentators, critics, and otherwise that posit that the formation of the 10 Commandments or the ten laws, along with the rest of the law codes found in the Torah, is influenced and shaped, in part, by other ancient Near Eastern law codes, such as the Hammurabi Code. So I was curious: How do these 10 Commandments stand unique apart from other ancient Near Eastern law codes? Are these 10 Commandments, particularly the first, about Israel moving to becoming a monotheistic nation instead of a polytheistic nation, or are these ten words performing a very different function altogether? Thanks for all you do. Grace and peace.

Jon: Yeah, thanks for that question.

Tim: It's a great question.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Wow. Wow. We could spend a whole series just on those set of questions alone.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Actually, in a way, we kind of have spent a good chunk of a series a long time ago on your question, Khuliso, when we did the how to read biblical law [How to Read the Bible podcast series: E26-E30 and How to Read the Bible video E13: Biblical Law] in the "How to Read the Bible" series with both the video and a whole podcast series. We touched on this very question about the ancient Near Eastern context of law codes, where they came from, how much biblical law codes have in common with them. So yes, no one can debate: The laws that we find in the Hebrew Bible are similar to, sometimes identical to, laws found in ancient Near Eastern law codes. The Hammurabi Code is exciting because it was the first one that was discovered back in—I'm pretty sure it was the 1800s. We tell that story in the how to read biblical law [How to Read the Bible podcast series: E26-E30 and How to Read the Bible video E13: Biblical Law]. So one way we often think about it, or the way the question gets worded, is: Well, was the Bible influenced by, you know, these other law codes?

Jon: Oh, right.

Tim: And I just would invite a bit of a reframing there to say: The Bible is an expression of ancient Near Eastern law, these laws are—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] —and it comes from a culture that had lots of conventions and assumptions and a long literary tradition about how these law codes are written. And there's lots of other expressions of them too, the Hammurabi Code. But there's other ancient Near Eastern collections. The Laws of Eshnunna is an Assyrian collection. There's Hittite collections. So more the question is: All of these law codes are

an expression that come from the royal courts of these other countries. And what they embody is—usually they're connected to a king, like for the Babylonian code, King Hammurabi. And he first tells a story—this is on the famous statue of Hammurabi, and there's a picture at the top. And as it were, he meets and is enthroned by the sun god, who enthrones him to be a wise king. And then what he says is he was taught by the gods the wisdom of justice and righteousness, and then the laws are an expression of that wisdom. And then, what we noted in that series—and it's super cool—I learned a lot from the Hebrew Bible scholar Joshua Berman. I'd recommend his book called *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought*. And what he and many other scholars note is that if you look at the actual legal records of court cases—we have some of from some of these ancient cultures—what you'll find is none of those court cases ever quotes from these law codes—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: —to legitimate their decisions or to give them authority. It seems like these law codes had a different function, that were teaching scribes and the people who worked in the royal court—teaching them wisdom.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: They were like wisdom instruction for how to think justly and righteously about complicated moral issues. So they were an expression of, like, a wisdom tradition for how to train people. And that is very similar to their function in the Hebrew Bible, but there's also some important differences too. So that's just one whole thing that's really interesting about ancient law codes.

Jon: We have examples of court cases, ancient court cases, and when we read them, you're saying we never see in those quotations from their law code?

Tim: That's right. And not only are they not quoted from—this is what we noted in that podcast series—and again, I was sharing what I learned from Joshua Berman's book—the decisions that are actually recorded in, like, ancient Babylonian records don't at all align with the consequences or the punishments— [laughs]

Jon: Oh, really?

Tim: —that are described in the Code of Hammurabi. [laughs]

Jon: [chuckles] Okay.

Tim: So I think it just shows us: Law codes had a different function than they do in our culture today.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: They were literary compositions designed to train people in case studies for how to think with wisdom and justice about complicated situations. I think the other thing, Khuliso, to your question, is that different cultures can have different moral norms or moral instincts that might on the surface look the same. So you could have, you know, a law that's in the Code of Hammurabi that's all—like, copy and paste in the book of Exodus. But what really is the thing that you want to compare between two different cultures isn't the particulars of a specific law, at least in my thinking. It would be, rather: What's the conception of reality [laughs] and of the gods and of: What are human beings and what are the purpose of human beings in relationship to the gods? What's the story behind the law that makes sense of the law? And then compare that culture to culture. And *that's* where the huge differences—

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] —between biblical law and, for example, the Code of Hammurabi or other ancient laws come into play. So the fact that the 10 Commandments begin with, “Don't have any other gods before me”—that's all part of the concept of the covenant between God and Israel. And “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” And that's marriage language. Song of Songs: “I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine.” “You are my people, and I am your Elohim.” The laws are an expression of an intimate bond between Yahweh and a whole group of people. That is unique. Yes, there were covenants between gods and kings, but to the degree and the level of intimacy that Yahweh is inviting a people into, that's a very unique story. And that is—again, this is—I learned most and best from Joshua Berman on this point, but there's lots of other scholars that have reinforced that basic idea. So the idea that the laws are an expression of wisdom and justice, and they're part of how I show love and loyalty to the God who rescued my family out of Egypt and slavery, that's unique. And that as a grounding kind of reason for why I would obey these laws, that's what makes the Hebrew Bible laws stand out in their ancient context.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Mmm. Yeah, to say back it then—what I'm hearing you say is: The story that the Bible's inviting us into, of being—all humans being the image of God and not just kings, and also what you're pointing at, which is God intimately, relationally connecting in a covenant relationship with a people that's using metaphors of marriage—that story world is unique even though it lives within the ancient Near Eastern context using similar conventions. But that's very, very unique.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] And could we also say that the wisdom that you're supposed to find within it is then also—you're going to find some things that are

comparable, but you're going to find a lot of things that are going to feel in stark contrast to the other cultures around?

Tim: Yeah. Yep. That's right. So that's why in this series that we just did on the Ten Words slash Commandments, we were constantly going back to: What's the bigger story? What's the wisdom underneath the command?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] And usually, that involves exploring the hyperlinks that go backward to the garden of Eden and then forward into Israel's history to see that what the commands are doing is just inviting you into a view of reality where certain ways of relating to your neighbor just kind of follow logically, if you believe that there's one creator, source of all reality, and every human I meet is, you know, made in that God's image and all life is an expression of God's goodness and all that kind of stuff. So the differences come in the reasons underneath the commands. I should be less bothered by surface-level similarities between biblical and other ancient Near Eastern commands and more interested in: How does the reasoning underneath it compare?

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Thanks for that question.

[How Do Modern Artistic Depictions of God and Jesus Relate to the 2nd Commandment? (10:50-18:24)]

Tim: Okay, there were three runaway winners for the top repeated questions about the 10 Commandments. So I'm going to take them in descending order through the commandments. The number one most repeated question was about the second command about idols: "Don't make any idols representing God."

Jon: Ah.

Tim: Wow, I had no idea this was such a provocative and—so many sides of this question that didn't even occur to me or to you to think about.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So let's first hear a question from Janice, who wants to point out an elephant in the room that you and I didn't even notice.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: Yeah.

Janice: Hi, Janice Scott, Peachtree Corners, Georgia. Why wasn't the second commandment elephant in the room discussed? Depictions of God and Jesus in art, TV, movies, even when the art is inspiring, made with the best of intentions and love for God and his word, for example, The Chosen. I really wanted to hear from the guys about biblically: Why or why not? Thank you.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: So good.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So the elephant of the room is, I mean, not just The Chosen, which is a TV series —

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Awesome TV series, about the life of Jesus, but also—

[Jon laughs]

Jon: We happen to do that a lot.

Tim: [chuckles] Everything that we've ever made at the BibleProject, uh—we're constantly—

Jon: Visually depicting—

Tim: Yeah— [laughs]

Jon: God and Jesus.

Tim: —God and— [laughs] yeah, totally.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So—ah, what's so funny is, when I read this, I was like: "Oh, yeah, it just didn't even occur to me to think about that."

Jon: I'm thinking—I'm trying to figure out why I didn't smell the elephant in the room. [laughs]

Tim: [excited] Oh, yeah, usually you do. You have a pretty good sniffer—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —for that kind of stuff.

Jon: I think I know why for me. I—

Tim: Yeah, okay, I think I know why, too, but you go.

Jon: Okay. Well, we were just really talking about the actual ancient practice of creating idols.

Tim: The statues.

Jon: Statues.

Tim: Yes, yes.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] I can see the connection to, like, film and art and things, but for me, it was disconnected enough that I was just interested in that, the statue of an animal or a creature that represents God. And for me, since the conversation was in that world, and that was enough—that was interesting enough that we didn't pivot to go: *“Okay, well now what's the wisdom towards art?”* And I know there's a lot of conversation around that. We just didn't even step into it.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, I think you named one piece that was very similar to mine, which was: We were focused on ancient idols primarily. What matters just as much, or you could say even the whole premise of “Don't make an image of God,” isn't just about the image itself. It's about the context of: What kind of image for what purpose, and what do you do with it? So we're talking about—in terms of the ancient context of the command, we're talking about physical objects that were set up in shrines, temples, like, high places that were ritual spaces dedicated as holy, sacred places for a spiritual presence, for a deity, spiritual being.

Jon: Yeah, to connect with a god.

Tim: Yep. And then I go to that, expecting it to be a place where the divine space and my space unite.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And I offer whatever gifts to the deity, I'm encountering it, asking for it to use its power on my behalf for my good—

Jon: Yeah. Right.

Tim: —or occasionally, against someone else—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —for their bad. So that’s what’s in the biblical authors’ minds primarily.

Jon: Right.

Tim: However, you and I did talk about—we read Deuteronomy 4. Moses gets underneath the logic of idolatry when he says, “Listen, you guys—you didn’t see any form”—

Jon: Right. Yeah.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] —“at—on the top of Mount Sinai.” And that is imitated by the ark of the covenant, which God says is his throne, enthroned above the cherubim. But instead of there being a statue of, like, a humanoid, something, it’s just an empty space.

Jon: It’s invisible.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Invisible throne.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] Except on that number of occasions, you know, that Moses and or other prophets did encounter a somebody. And it was in the form of what they all say—Ezekiel says this—an Adam. “I saw something like an Adam riding above the cherubim.” So they do see a figure, but they’re very hesitant to describe it.

Jon: Okay. And they are never going to create a statue of it.

Tim: Yeah. Actually, many Israelites did, but they were breaking the command—

Jon: Yeah, okay—

Tim: —as they did that. [laughs]

Jon: —right, right.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] So I think—I appreciate the question, Janice, because it helped me remind myself—and it sounds like for you, too—what I think the biblical authors are focused on isn’t just the making of the image, but it’s the purpose of it and then what you do with it. And in those cases, it was all ritual. It’s about encountering a transcendent being in and through this physical object. So in my mind, that is pretty different than teaching or explaining and using visual images as illustrations or aids to help understand a concept. Which, for example, we’re in explainer educational media.

Jon: Yep. Mhm.

Tim: You know, so that’s what we do.

Jon: Yeah. But then you can also see the connection, which is: What's the wisdom? Well, one of the wisdom is: Let's not distort God—

Tim: Yes, misrepresent—

Jon: —or diminish God or misrepresent God.

Tim: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You can combine it with the next command about not carrying the name.

Jon: Yes. Yeah. And so if you make explanatory content—

Tim: Oh, sure. Yeah.

Jon: —in a way that diminishes God, and then I think we are breaking the wisdom of the command?

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] Oh. Yeah. Okay. So here's an example of our own experience with the project. So one of our early videos was on the covenants, and we used the guidance of Daniel chapter 7, which depicts God as the Ancient of Days, as a humanoid—male humanoid old guy. [laughs]

Jon: [chuckles] Mhm. With a beard.

Tim: Yeah, the Ancient of Days. So we used that as our kind of figure. And even though he was technically transparent, it was on a white background. And so—

Jon: It just looked like a white old guy.

Tim: —it was essentially—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: —like a Caucasian old man.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: And we were hanging with that for a while. It only took a year or two before I was kind of like: "Yeah, man, I wonder if that was a missed opportunity." But in the meanwhile, one of our artists, actually one of our artists who had made the localization of the video into Spanish, came up with an idea. It was awesome. [laughs]

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Because we had come up with this icon, an image, but of God as a blue arm reaching down from the top of the—

Jon: Yeah. This massive hand coming out of the skies.

Tim: Top of the screen or side screen.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] And so we thought: Let's remake the covenants video and then just have the blue hand do everything that the Ancient of Days was doing. And so we remade it. And I'm so pleased that we did that.

Jon: Right.

Tim: So that was a good learning, because I think we realized: Oh, without even meaning it—which is your point, Janice—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —with good intentions—we used an image, even though it's from the Bible—

Jon: Yes.

Tim: —that still could—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —just not help us, in the long run, think about the God who was above and beyond all things. So we pivoted.

Jon: And let me push this more—

[Tim laughs]

Jon: —because the wisdom could extend deeper. And if you're telling your church stories about God—you're crafting a sermon, or you're training your kids, and you're creating a caricature of God just with words, you're creating an image.

[Can We Diminish God by How We Talk About Him (Like Saying, "God Is Love")?
(18:24-25:17)]

Tim: Ooh, Jon, great. Okay. What you're asking is what the next question that I had selected—

Jon: Sweet.

Tim: —was all about, from Lucas Peterson in Denmark.

Lucas: Hey, Jon. Hey, Tim. In the episode on the second command, you said that the moment you create an image in your mind of it, you're already limiting and containing it because you're reducing it to something that you've experienced. It made me wonder: Are we reducing God when we say "God is good" or "God is love"? Is this, in a sense, making an idol of God? I'd love to hear your take on this.

Jon: Love it.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yes. Exactly.

Tim: Is that what you're saying?

Jon: Same—same—yes, exactly. Because we are invited to say "God is love."

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: So obviously there's some—

Tim: It—right from the apostles.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Yeah— [laughs] something good about that. But what, Lucas, you're picking up on is the same danger is there of: We could then use our language to describe God in such a way that actually diminishes God or changes God. And that's the same danger of the art conversation, which is connected to the wisdom of idolatry. I think it's all connected.

Tim: Yeah, totally. Yeah, certainly we can misrepresent God visually. And that's part of what the command about no idols represents. But I think you and I both at least came to agreement that our reasons under that were more. It's about what you do with the image, about the ritual practice of it, and so on.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But you can also misrepresent God with language. How's that related? And what's interesting is false representation through language—

Jon: Is powerful.

Tim: —is the—it's powerful. It's also a theme in the 10 Commandments—

Jon: Oh. [chuckles]

Tim: —but it's about false representation about other humans—

Jon: Yeah, that's right, the ninth command.

Tim: —who are made in the image of God.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But you know, you can misrepresent people who are images of God, and you can misrepresent God. But the question is: Even when we say something that the apostles say—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —that God is love, or what the poets of the Psalms say, “God is good,” what occurs to any human’s mind when they hear the word “good” or “love”—and this is your point, Lucas—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —is that it’s—the only meaning that can come into someone’s mind is based off of what they think the word means from their experience.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So in a way, every conception we have of God fails. But some fail in worse ways than others.

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: And some fail not because it’s wrong, but because it’s just—it’s limited.

Jon: It’s not enough.

Tim: Yeah, but that doesn’t mean that it’s, I think, wrong. God has revealed God’s self in words and in a human person— [laughs]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —right?

Jon: Right.

Tim: And in an invisible presence, [laughs] the Spirit. And the person is Jesus.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: And then the words are Scripture, right?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So God didn’t have any qualms about using words. But then—well, actually, this is true of any human, too. In fact, this just happened. I was teaching with a pastor’s group last week, and none of those people in the room have ever met you. But I would tell a

story about BibleProject, and I would say, like, “Oh, Jon and I.” And so I’m representing you. No verbal description of you can ever truly equal—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —you, you know what I mean?

Jon: Sure.

Tim: That’s true of any person.

Jon: Yeah, yeah.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] So even our words can’t ever fully represent other people, but that doesn’t mean it’s automatically a misrepresentation. It just means it’s just a small taste.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: And I guess, that—for me, that’s the difference between language about God that can be true—“God is good”—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —but the way that God is good is in the way *God* is good, which is far above what I might imagine. But that’s different than an idolatrous representation, I think, of God, which is about representing God in a way that just God is not.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Is that the difference?

Jon: I think so. Representing God in a way that God is not. Also representing God in a way that God becomes controllable—

Tim: Ooh, there you go.

Jon: —or containable.

Tim: Yes. Great.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] So now I’ve got my little shrine room. I go in on my terms. I ask what I want. I do the thing. Or even, it’s not the thing I want to do. It’s a sacrifice, whatever. But I’m going, and I’m transacting. And you can do that with words and images. I think you can get into that territory where it starts to, like, really bleed into idolatry. Then there’s just the wisdom of: Let’s not misrepresent God. Which is also the wisdom of the third command, which you mentioned, carrying the name in vain. So I think they’re both here.

Tim: Yeah. I read a really fascinating book by a church historian named Mark Sheridan. It was called *Language for God in the Patristic Tradition*. [laughs] Patristic meaning, in the early church fathers, for the first few centuries of the most smart Christians that were bishops and pastors and writers. Fascinating. And what he noted is that this was a big deal, actually, in early Christian theology—right language about God. [laughs]

Jon: Mhm. Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] Because Christianity was not a centralized movement, and it was decentralized and trying to find ways to stay unified. And what he noted is that this was a big struggle. And what many early church pastors and bishops circled around was a line in Deuteronomy chapter 1, where God says that God leading Israel through the wilderness was *like* a father leading his child through the wilderness. And they grabbed onto that phrase, “like,” and to say: Well, if God is willing to *liken* himself to an experience of human parent and child and say “me relating to you is like this,” then that became a little template for just all of our language about God. But a child can think something about his parent that is true. But what concept does a child really have of what their parents’ whole life experience is like, and where their parents came from? You know what I mean?

Jon: Yeah, right.

Tim: Like, when you’re a toddler, you don’t know.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] So something can be an insufficient match between the word and reality, but still be true. Our words can’t contain God, but they can still truly describe an aspect of God. And that is different than idol statues, which is about control. I want to control the deity and make it work for me. And the idol statue is a means of doing that. So something like that.

Jon: Yeah. [pause and exhale] Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Lots more to explore there, but thank you for that.

Tim: Yep.

[How Do We Honor Aging Parents Well or Honor Abusive and Dangerous Parents?
(25:17-34:56)]

Tim: Okay. Let's see—ooh, second most repeated question. We're moving on from— [laughs] we're making our way very slowly through the 10 Commandments. Second most repeated question was about the honor of your parents, about the fifth command.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This was an elephant in the room. And I forget—maybe like the afternoon after we went on a walk, you brought this up.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: And you were like, "Did we talk about this?" And I'm like, "I don't know if we talked about that." I have a memory of that. Leanne, would you help us notice the thing that we didn't address? [laughs]

Leanne: Hi, my name is Leanne, and I'm from Lutz, Florida. I'm a mental health therapist, and I find that some of my Christian clients struggle with the fifth commandment. I wonder if you could spend time with the fifth commandment from two perspectives. First, a person who equates obeying their parents with honoring them, though the parents may now have limited insight due to the realities of aging. Or two, a person who struggles to know how to honor their parents because their parents have been abusive or dangerous. Thanks so much.

Jon: I also noticed on the YouTube comments for this video, there was a lot of people talking about how [pause] lame their parents were.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] And that's just—how complicated and hard. And it makes perfect sense. I mean, there's so many screwed-up people, and we easily create problems in our relationships. And so it's just going to be very common. You can have parents who are going to be abusive or dangerous, like Leanne mentioned.

Tim: Mhm. Mhm. Yeah, and even when you have a good relationship with your parents, it's complicated just because of the history. I mean, you can have a great relationship and still have it be hard to get along or hard to make decisions, especially as your parents are aging or—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So yes, I'm so glad that so many of you asked [laughs] about this.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This is one of those issues where [sharp exhale] we're just two guys—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: —middle-aged guys [laughs] from the West Coast, so—but we want to wrestle with Scripture along with you all. Uhm, here are some thoughts—just—I'll kick some things out there. One is: The 10 Commandments are one expression of divine wisdom about relating to other people, alongside many other important guides. Part of the reason why we even did the 10 Commandments is because we're followers of Jesus, and we spent a year plus just meditating on the Sermon on the Mount—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —and the teachings of Jesus. So a really formative season for me when I was in pastoral ministry was spending lots of years in Matthew. And in the five main teaching blocks of Jesus within Matthew, the fourth one, in chapters 18, is all about forgiveness and in complicated relationships.

Jon: Mmm. Right.

Tim: And there's that one important paragraph on conflict resolution.

Jon: [exhales] Mhm.

Tim: And that's really key. And so for me, that—I can't read the fifth commandment in Exodus and Deuteronomy apart from my allegiance to Jesus as my rabbi— [laughs]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: You know?—and reading them in light of each other. So when Jesus says, “When somebody's wronged you”—and here he's thinking about in the context of the church community—“then,” he says, “first of all, you need to forgive them in your heart but also pursue reconciliation and making the relationship right,” like, trying to make things right with them.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And he has a multi-step process that he asks his disciples [chuckles] to follow, which, the first one is: Go towards them one-on-one. Don't talk about them. Don't just sit on it. Go to them.

Jon: Mmm. Which is so hard.

Tim: Oh, it's—dude. [pause and exhale] It's so hard.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's very hard. But if that can work, that's optimum as opposed to just letting the resentment, you know, seethe. [laughs]

Jon: Right. Yeah. Or talking around the issue and creating camps—

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Or asking all your friends to like pray—

Jon: Oh. [laughs]

Tim: —for this person or—you know?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And it's—which is another weird form of avoiding it. So go to them. But he says, "If they don't acknowledge what they've done to you, they won't even acknowledge it"—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —Then everything he says just takes for granted that you shouldn't ever be alone with that person again. "Go back with another person. And if that doesn't work, go back with some more." Again, this is in the context of a church community. And if this person won't acknowledge what many other people, third parties can see—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —that's not a safe relationship.

Jon: Create some boundaries.

Tim: Time to create some boundaries. So I think just that principle right there is so deep in my psyche, from wisdom from Jesus.

Jon: Yeah. That applies to your parents as well.

Tim: That's the lens through which I'm engaging with the fifth commandment. Honoring your parents—first, I think the first primary context actually has to do with support, which is what we focused on.

Jon: Yeah, right.

Tim: That's what Jesus seemed to understand it to mean in Matthew chapter 15. I think the reason why, Leanne, *obedience* to parents gets equated with honoring parents is because of how the Apostle Paul—

Jon: Right. Quotes that.

Tim: —quotes the fifth commandment when he's talking to children in Greco-Roman households in his letter to the Ephesians.

Jon: Yeah. Right.

Tim: And you can see how obedience can be an expression of honor, one hundred percent.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah, especially when you're a child in the house.

Tim: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. But the fifth commandment is primarily about, I think, adult children relating to adult parents. And you can think of many circumstances where not obeying your parents in terms of what they say is actually—

Jon: [chuckles] Honoring.

Tim: —the best way to honor them.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: One hundred percent.

Jon: Yeah, the example you give, Leanne, of, like, a parent who is aging and doesn't understand their limits anymore—

Tim: Absolutely. Yes.

Jon: —and wants something that's not good for them anymore.

Tim: Exactly. Yep. And there's—

Jon: How do you take care of that parent?

Tim: —a thousand different ways that could play out.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] Also with parents that are dangerous or abusive. You can think of many scenarios where—gosh, I'm—a whole bunch of stories in my mind right now of parents I know who have made the painful decision that their own kids, their grandkids, shouldn't be around their grandparents because of the life habits or the environments that—it's just not safe. And so it's very difficult decisions to make that need to be made on the basis of other wisdom.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] So maybe this is a really good opportunity to talk about the wisdom nature of the 10 Commandments, that how one honors one's parents is going to look different in situation to situation, and other wisdom from God, in this case, from Jesus, needs to be factored in.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: You can't just copy and paste any of the commands. Even the 10 Commandments require nuanced moral thinking in light of other parts of Scripture and wisdom.

Jon: Yeah, because you could use this then—you could weaponize this command and have someone now be in a relationship with their parents that isn't healthy.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: You could say, "*But you've got to obey the command.*"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And what I hear you saying is: There's wisdom within the command that we need to take very seriously.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: And that is—

Tim: Because you could weaponize it in the opposite direction and end up abdicating responsibility—

Jon: Yeah, exactly.

Tim: —towards your parents.

Jon: Yes.

Tim: And we're back to that point we've made so many times—the 10 Commandments, Sermon on the Mount, how to read biblical law—the laws are an expression of forming people who are wise, and wisdom is about knowing the difference between good and bad in a particular situation. And every situation is different than any other situation, which doesn't mean it's all relative and you're in a sea of subjectivity, but it does mean that wisdom requires creativity in a context of which elements to emphasize, which wisdom to highlight, which things to say. "*Hmm, that doesn't quite apply this time because of this set of factors.*"

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: That is wisdom. And the 10 Commandments are pushing us in that direction. So maybe it's that different cultures, different circumstances, are probably going to have different patterns. So maybe very strong, traditional honor-shame cultures, they're going to find the honoring piece really easy, but probably have a real hard time with boundaries, the boundaries piece.

Jon: Mmm. Okay.

Tim: And then there might be other cultures that are highly individualistic, not very collectivist, and so it's very easy for people to draw boundaries, [laughs] and maybe too many boundaries. And where—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I might need to be pushed to sticking with my parents and obligating myself to them and their needs in ways that might feel uncomfortable to me, but that are honoring. So it's wisdom.

Jon: Yeah. Wisdom's tricky then.

Tim: [chuckles] Yeah, it is.

Jon: Sometimes you just want a rule.

Tim: [laughs] A rule would be so much simpler.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] But of course, there's no rule book big enough for every complicated situation. So the wisdom. And the wisdom also comes from community. And that's part of the Matthew 18 thing too, is: Bring people along. Not at first. At first go —

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that's right.

Jon: —try to, like, work it out. But bring people along. What's the wisdom here? You don't have to be alone in figuring out how to deal with your parents.

Tim: Yeah. Yes.

Jon: Or with any relationship. And it's not going to feel simple, but there's something about, at the right time, bringing in the people and getting that communal wisdom is—

Tim: Mmm. Really important.

Jon: —good.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. So thank you, Leanne, and for everybody who raised that important topic. There's probably more things about that—more nuances that we're not addressing.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: But let's at least lean in there.

[How Does the 6th Commandment Apply to Killing in Military Combat? (34:56-52:52)]

Tim: Really, this is from idols, which raises a whole bunch of things. To honor your parents raises a whole bunch of things. How about “Don’t kill”?

Jon: Was this the third most—

Tim: [laughs] This is the third most repeated question that y’all sent in—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —was about all the implications of what that means, “Don’t kill” or “Don’t murder.” So Kyle, you name pretty much all the most complicated, controversial parts [chuckles] of this question that we didn’t talk about. So I’ll let—Kyle, I’ll let you ask the question.

Kyle: Hey, Tim and Jon, thank you so much for taking my question. My question has to do with the commandment of “Thou shalt not kill.” What would be your thoughts on military killing? Thinking about when God commands the Israelites to kill people in a military way as they’re conquering, but then also how that relates to modern militaries today. Could it be possible for a Christian to ethically serve on a military and take someone’s life in the form of military combat? Thank you so much for taking my question.

Jon: Yeah.

[Tim exhales]

Jon: So you know, one thing I noticed is this translation “Do not kill”—very controversial.

Tim: Yeah. Oh, totally.

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And I didn’t anticipate how controversial it was going to be. And I think it’s because when you say, “Do not murder,” you can be like, “*Okay, well, there’s a difference between killing someone and murder.*”

Tim: Yep. And that is why almost all [laughs] of our modern translations say, “Don’t murder.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: You think so? Smooth it out?

Tim: Mhm. Mhm.

Jon: But you make this case, which is to say there is actually—if I'm remembering correctly, there is an adequate word for that in Hebrew.

Tim: Mhm. *Harag*.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. It's what Cain does to Abel on page 4 of Genesis.

Jon: Then there's a more general word, which is just any sort of ending a human's life.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] But it's specific to humans. So what we don't have in English is a word that's broader than just murder. It also includes killing a human, but doesn't include, like, killing an animal. So when you say, "Do not kill"—like, kill what? You know?

Tim: And we talked about that—

Jon: Yes.

Tim: —like, killing plants, killing animals, killing humans.

Jon: Yep.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So this is about killing humans. So "Do not kill humans." If you land there, and you're like—that's the way to get to the tension of this command directly—

Tim: And again, just a quick note, just to summarize the discussion that we had: The reason why I was persuaded is just a simple study of the word used in all the other cases that it's used.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And it's—

Jon: Often, unintentional murder.

Tim: It is used to describe both accidental and premeditated. So we need a word that represents both of those. And that is the English word “kill.”

Jon: Yeah. And murder doesn’t do that.

Tim: Nuh-uh.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] But in a military context, then, you can say, “*Okay, we’re not murdering, but we are ending life. And so let’s just remove this command from*”—

Tim: That discussion.

Jon: —“*that discussion.*”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But what we’ve done is say: Actually, no, that command is still at the center of this discussion.

Tim: It’s trying—in fact, it has to be why the word chosen for this command seems to intentionally *provoke* the whole set of issues, right?

Jon: [chuckles] Yeah.

Tim: It’s as if the author choosing this word *ratsakh* is trying to stir the pot on purpose.

Jon: Yeah.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And we talked about this, too.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That there’s all sorts of then situations where we need to wrestle with: What’s the wisdom for us?

Tim: Yep.

Jon: And this is a really big one.

Tim: It’s a huge, huge one. And Kyle, you’re posing the questions—there’s two layers to it. One, you’re asking about within the Bible when God commissions people to kill.

Jon: Oh, right, yeah.

Tim: And then there's that—how does that relate to people who are followers of Jesus, and then sort of in the military or in battle, and how does that—so I want to tease those apart for a second.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] So when it comes to God telling one of his covenant partners to kill someone else, I think here we're in the realm of: Outside of Eden, God chooses not to abandon partnership with humans, ongoing, outside of Eden. God stays committed to humans even though he knows—this is what God says about humans after the flood—is: "I know that the heart of the human is just bad." Not only bad, not bad all the time, but it is bad, bent, as it were, from its youth. And there's going to be a lot more violence. And what God doesn't do is say, "I'm done with humans." He works with humans as he finds them. And that continues just through the biblical story, which looks to the reader like a form of compromise. Because God works with murderers. God works with— [laughs] and even sometimes then—if there's, like in the case of Canaanites, which you're talking about, Kyle, commissioning the Israelites to the promised land—

Jon: To kill the Canaanites.

Tim: Yeah, to kill *some* Canaanites. And then the actual story of Joshua problematizes it from every possible angle to say—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] "*Well, what if the Canaanites were more righteous than the Israelites in a given story? What if the Israelites actually become the enemy by betraying*"—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —right?—with the Achan story? But the Rahab story, the Canaanite's the hero. So even in the context of God says, "Kill the bad guys," the one book of the Bible dedicated to—

Jon: Those stories?

Tim: —right?—those stories is saying "There's no binaries here. The bad guys can become the good guys, good guys become bad guys." But you do have instances of God doing that. And I don't know any other way around that. It's just to—you can ignore that part, or you can maybe say: Well, since Jesus said the opposite, you know, [laughs] of that, "Don't kill, rather, bless your neighbor, pray for them, and even if they kill you, that's what they're going to do. Don't pick up the sword. Those who live by the sword die by the sword." So Jesus is very clear on that point. So you could hold that contradiction

—right?—within the Bible, and just say, “*Well, maybe the stuff that God said to Joshua —either God didn’t really say that, that was a mistake, that the humans misheard God [laughs] on that point, or it’s an allegory, it just never happened.*”

Jon: Where does Jesus say don’t kill?

Tim: Mmm. So there’s multiple ways that you would get there. One is Sermon on the Mount.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: About when he takes up “Do not murder”—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: —and then he takes it all the way back up.

Jon: Yeah, don’t even have contempt for your brother.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So already he’s, like, raising it way [chuckles] up there. His refusal to use violence as any justifiable means to forward his program for the arrival of God’s Kingdom would be the other main one. And then his teaching on enemy love and forgiveness.

Jon: Okay. But there’s no actual statement where he says, “Don’t kill.”

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] Yeah, though when Peter chops off the guy’s ear, and he says, “Put your sword back. I could call a lot of angels right now. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword.” But you’re right, it’s not a 10 Commandment style—

Jon: [laughs] Yeah.

Tim: That’s true. But I think the point is is that the ethic of Jesus, both that he lived and invited his followers to, seems like a systematic rejection of violence—

Jon: Right.

Tim: —against others as an option for advancing God’s Kingdom. However, does that address all of the issues that you’re raising, Kyle? Every possible issue about war, defense, military—right? I mean, there’s a whole bunch of things that Christians have to think through.

Jon: Yeah. Jesus never encountered, I don’t think—did he encounter a situation where —that we’re told that someone who had to work as a soldier, and tell them, like—

Tim: Oh, I see.

Jon: —“*You*”—

Tim: You know, he encountered the Roman centurion—

Jon: Right, the Roman centurion.

Tim: —whose sick—John, the—usually the classic case is in Luke when some Roman soldiers come to John the Baptist, and they say, “What should we do?” And what he says is: “Quit oppressing people. Don’t extort people for bribes or money, and be satisfied with your wages.”

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: But he doesn’t say “*Quit.*”

Jon: Yeah. “*Stop killing people.*” [laughs]

Tim: Yeah, and so people are like, “*Well, does that mean it’s legitimate for him?*” No, the status of people serving in the military in the early church—and there’s recorded stories of this—it was very controversial.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And bishops didn’t all agree on what to do. So let’s just acknowledge we’re kind of shifting from God commissioning people to kill.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We’re going into the military question.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: We haven’t quite tied, and maybe that’s okay.

Jon: Oh, well, let me try to tie that up. You’re teasing those apart, that when we see God commanding humans to kill in the Hebrew Bible, it’s related to this command because you’re going to feel that tension immediately.

Tim: Yeah. Yes, yes.

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] And then you’re saying: What is going on in the story of the Bible, because God is for life, but also God has the right to end human life. Humans are violent. So working with humans in the first place is this weird compromise of working with violent people who are going to create problems. And then when you get into the story of God telling [laughs] Israel, “Go into the land and take it.” And: “There’s people in there that you’re going to dispossess of it, and you’re going to kill them.” That whole thing is so fraught—

Tim: Oh, it’s so fraught.

Jon: Like, when you think about it, it's just like: Oh, man, many people can't follow Jesus because that's in their Bible.

Tim: Yep. Yeah.

Jon: And you're saying, "Well, one, let's look at what Jesus says about our position towards" —

Tim: Yes. Because the only reason I'm reading this whole Bible—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —is because I'm a follower of Jesus.

Jon: Yeah. But even before that, you said, "Well, just pay attention to how the text itself is problematizing it." [laughs]

Tim: Yes.

Jon: And so now it's messing with you on purpose.

Tim: Mhm. That's right.

Jon: But now let's get to Jesus and how Jesus thinks about violence and power. And all of that is instructive, but now we could turn the corner and say, "But what about Christians serving in the military?" [laughs]

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Right? That's a different question.

Tim: Well, again, to maybe just tie up the Jesus thing, to transition back to the military thing—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —it would just be that: The reason I read any of these texts is because I'm a follower of Jesus.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] And I think to be a historic, Orthodox, confessing Christian of whatever tradition—Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant—is to say that Jesus has the pride of central place in shaping my view of God [laughs] and God's will and that his words are a lens through which I evaluate all of the different parts of the Bible. Now, you can overdo that and smooth everything out and just ignore, or you can use that as a way to then engage what's happening in the book of Joshua and divine violence and wrestle with the tensions. But that's how I would approach that question

from within. I'm a follower of Jesus. So I'm going to take his ethic. However, how exactly do you apply Jesus's own relationship to non-violence in light of all the questions that Jesus didn't face or didn't raise? Now we're going into—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: —that bigger question. And I guess, Kyle, I—the first thing I need to say is: This is a question I was heavily invested in and read and discussed and debated with my friends in—for years. And I've kind of come to this place where my convictions have evolved over time. I expect they'll keep evolving. [chuckles] And so I almost want to encourage you, Kyle—like, I don't think you should actually care what my thoughts are. [laughs] But I want to encourage you to take your thoughts seriously and to wrestle through the issues, which every generation of Christians has had to do. I was really helped by—I'll just recommend a couple books because that's my love language.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: I haven't met you, Kyle. I love it when there's a handful of publishers in theology that do these multiple-views books.

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: So there's a great, more recent one edited by Paul Copan, it's by InterVarsity Press, called *War, Peace and Violence: Four Christian Views*. It's an *excellent* collection of essays, each one making a case for four different takes on Christians, military, non-violence, pacifism—all of it. It's fantastic.

Jon: Mhm. Okay.

Tim: Another great expression of a case for non-violence, not pacifism, but non-violence, is a book by Preston Sprinkle called *Fight*. And he's someone who, as an academic and a pastor, went through a change of his views, and he takes you through his whole journey as to why. I guess the point is: It's very complicated. Because if you're in a situation where it feels like there's moral clarity and defense of someone else involves taking the life of an attacker or a wrongdoer—when you're actually faced with that scenario, which many followers of Jesus have throughout history, like, how do you [laughs] love your neighbor best in that scenario?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's *very* hard. This is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer had to wrestle through of whether to participate in the plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And his letters wrestling with it are just [sharp exhale] heart-surgings. Right?

Jon: Yeah. Yeah, and I'm noticing, though, a very big difference in what you were describing, which is the—with a lot of humility and trepidation, thinking it through and going, "When?" And if— [sharp exhale] "*If ever*" and "*How*" and really thinking that through. Versus just—

Tim: Oh.

Jon: —having a position which is: "*This is just how God gets things done in the world.*"

Tim: Right.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] "*The powerful have to just destroy the bad guys with violent power.*"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "*That's just how it has to work.*"

Tim: Yep. "*That's how God did it in the past. That's how he does it now.*"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And the Jesus story is just kind of like this unrelated blip of: "*Well, he had to die for our sins, so he died.*"

Jon: Right.

Tim: But his whole ethics of non-violence and how that lead to his death—

Jon: "*But Jesus is coming back with a sword in his mouth.*"

Tim: Right. So the story goes. No, but you're right. What you're painting a picture is a very common narrative of: God, you know, didn't have any qualms, taking care of the Canaanites with the sword of Joshua—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Jesus will come back with a sword, apparently, even though Revelation actually doesn't say that, but it's often taken to say that, because of the military imagery at the end of The Revelation.

Jon: Yeah, the sword that is coming out of his mouth.

Tim: His mouth.

Jon: Yeah. The word.

Tim: Yeah, and his blood is his own on his clothes, but that's a whole other thing. But you're painting a picture of how the Christian case for violence in dealing with bad guys —

Jon: Right.

Tim: —is just a very simple rhetorically powerful, persuasive—

Jon: Yes.

Tim: —force of many followers of Jesus in the world today.

Jon: Right. And I think if that's the place you're in, it—we—I feel like we're saying: Take a deep breath. [laughs]

[Tim exhales]

Tim: Let's slow down. Back up for a second.

Jon: Yeah. But if you're in the place where this question comes from, right?

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Now you're treating—

Tim: Yeah, you're doing the work.

Jon: You're doing it.

Tim: You're doing the work.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yes. Yeah. And we noted even in the context of the laws just in Exodus, the way capital punishment is in a kind of tension with "Do not kill," [laughs] right? That the community—

Jon: Right.

Tim: —and I read quotes from a scholar, Patrick Miller who kind of helped us kind of focus on this, that, in the very act of ending the life, capital punishment, of a murderer who ended the life of another human, you're—the community is actually violating the precise wording of the— [laughs] right?— of this command by killing.

Jon: Right.

Tim: So the Bible is giving an honest picture of the contradictions that we live in outside of Eden. And God gets into it with us.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He doesn't give us copy-and-paste rules, but he does invite us to wisdom. And—yeah, which I think you're affirming, Jon, as you sense, in Kyle's question, the stepping in, the wrestling—

Jon: Right.

Tim: —the not giving a simplistic narrative of extremes on either or, you know, for or against military service. But there's invitation here. And the fact that thoughtful Christians who adhere to the classic confession of faith can land in different places—I think anytime that's happening on an issue, it's worth paying attention. It doesn't mean everybody's right all the time. [laughs] But I think it does mean that probably every view is sniffing something that is actually true and good that's worth holding on to, but taken by itself, it could, you know, run away into an extreme. There's just—there's a pretty small list of topics like that through church history that just keep not going away.

Jon: Mmm.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that's a time to be humble, yeah, and to lean in, listen to all of Scripture, and listen to the Spirit in my community.

Jon: Yeah, that brings us back to this—the meta theme here, the Ten Words.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: They are an invitation to radically reshape your imagination so that you start wrestling with the right things in the right way.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Jon: And that doesn't create this simplistic kind of simple playbook for life, but it does something very real.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: And at times it's going to be very radical, but it won't always be cookie-cutter.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. And it might look like, in the history of the Jesus movement, different communities, different people responding to their issues and their time in ways that look really different from each other—

[Jon and Tim chuckle]

Tim: —right? And every one of them would say, “*I was trying to be faithful. I was trying to be faithful to God’s wisdom and what we felt like we were supposed to do.*” And what else can we do except just say, [chuckles] “God, have mercy on us.” You know?

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And take the next step, move forward, wake up tomorrow, try and live out the wisdom of Scripture.

[What Are Other Positive Implications of the 8th Commandment? (52:52-58:03)]

Tim: Should we end on another one that, uh, maybe is a little more upbeat.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: [laughs] This is a question from Jacob in Ohio.

Jon: Okay.

Jacob: Hey, Tim and Jon, this is Jacob, from Ohio. In listening to your discussion about not stealing, I was wondering if the flip side of that commandment might be like Acts chapter 2, with the followers of Jesus living with all things in common and no one’s saying that anything was theirs in particular. And also, Jesus saying, “Lend without expecting in return.” These seem to me to be maybe the fulfillment of how to relate to our stuff in the world. And I was wondering what you thought. Thank you for all that you do, and God bless.

Jon: Hmm. Thanks, Jacob.

Tim: Yeah, you know, also, I just—maybe it depends on how those of you listening—where you’re listening, but there was beautiful birdsong in the background of that question.

Jon: Mhm. Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: Made me think of Jesus’s teachings about—

Jon: [chuckles] Oh—

Tim: “Look at the birds of the air.”

Jon: —the birds.

Tim: Maybe that's what you were doing that morning, Jacob.

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: Yeah, thanks for that. You were flipping it over.

Jon: Flipping the “Do not steal.” Looking at the very radical [chuckles] generosity of the community of Jesus followers in Acts.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Sharing everything in common.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah, we were interested in flipping over “Don't steal” to help me become a better steward—

Jon: Right.

Tim: —of my neighbor's stuff.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I'm just now remembering we got there because the way that that commandment is flipped over in the later chapters of Exodus is by commands about: If you see your neighbor's donkey—

Jon: Oh, right. Yes.

Tim: —you know, like lost, return it to him.

Jon: Yep. Right.

Tim: Which is the opposite of taking it.

Jon: There's still property law in the Torah in a way. You know?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. That's right.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] But I think what I like about what you're bringing up, Jacob, is that there could be many ways to live out the wisdom underneath “Don't steal.” One of which could be: Help your neighbor steward their stuff. Another one would be: Just become less attached to my own stuff.

[Jon and Tim chuckle]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. Because why else do I steal, except I want to add to my stuff? And so generosity is, like, just inverting that.

Jon: Yeah. Totally. You can imagine scenarios where that could get out of hand—

[Tim laughs]

Jon: —and you're told, like, "*Hey, follow Jesus here.*"

Tim: Oh, sure.

Jon: "*You don't own anything anymore.*"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And it's—that's used to—

Tim: [sharp exhale] Yeah.

Jon: —like control and manipulate and abuse.

Tim: Yeah. That's—that's probably happened a time or two—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —in church history.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that's—people end up in really weird—weird cults and situations. Yeah.

Jon: Yeah. But imagine like a group of people living life together where, if you encountered them, you just kind of got this impression, like, "*They kind of share everything in common*"—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: —"*in this way that's working.*" That's really cool to imagine. And it seems like they're living the wisdom of the command.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: I love that.

Tim: Yeah, there is a dynamic in Acts—I'm remembering, years ago, [chuckles] from our Luke-Acts series—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: But when Luke makes that description about the church living in Jerusalem, you know, in the days after the resurrection, it was in the season after Passover and Pentecost, which were pilgrimage feasts.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: So you had a lot of out-of-town people in Jerusalem.

Jon: Mmm. They're hosting people.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So that also is part of that description. Acts is—hospitality is a part of that which is definitely the opposite of stealing—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —because you're inviting people in, and you're just like, "*Use up my stuff.*"

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: So even the story in Acts, while a really positive picture, gives us one way that a group of Jesus followers were living out the wisdom underneath the command "Don't steal." But there could be many others, too. You mentioned Jesus's teaching about lending without return. That's also from Luke.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And—yeah.

Jon: And there's Proverbs about that, too, right?

Tim: Yes. Yeah, many. So what I liked about just your point, Jacob, was when you flipped the command, it really highlights, I think, one of the main things we wanted to say about the 10 Commandments, which is what it means for a set of commands in the Bible to be wisdom from God.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah.

Tim: Which means there could be many possible different ways that we respond to that wisdom and live it out.

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] Yeah, you used the word creative, and I love that. It's wisdom. It's forcing you to be creative. So what is going on in my life where the wisdom of this command is inviting me to just be more creative than I'm being?

Tim: Ooh. Yeah, creative take. Yeah.

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] Like, push myself in a new direction. That's what I loved about that community that I kind of learned biblical generosity through. There was just so much creativity. Just like, "*Yeah, I know everyone does it this way. But I just thought: What if I did it this way?*"

Tim: Yeah, sure.

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] And you're like, "*You're allowed to do that? You're allowed to, like, be generous in that kind of way?*" And you just suddenly realize: Oh, we constrain ourselves for all sorts of reasons.

Tim: Limit our imaginations.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Limit our imaginations. And there's something here, it's just like: Let's open up our—you know, the aperture of our imaginations and allow ourselves to be more creative in ways that'll feel uncomfortable, but also ways that might end up feeling really fun and exciting. Yeah.

[Conclusion (58:03-1:01:29)]

Tim: You know, what was—when I said that earlier, I had just recently been thinking about that line from Psalm 33 about: By wisdom, God ordered the skies, he created the skies by the breath of his mouth, everything that inhabits them. And God's wisdom in creation, or creation as an expression of God's wisdom. And what is creation, except— [sharp exhale] there's a lot of different things going on—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] —you know?— [laughs] from like the quantum level—right?—to biological level, to relationships, and music and art and water molecules—all of it. It's just creativity. And wisdom is what's used to talk about God's approach towards bringing into being what was not. So of course, the 10 Commandments would just be an invitation to wisdom to participate with God in creativity in our relationships to each other. And the ten is just the beginning. So flipping them, looking at their opposites. So all that to say is: That was a big theme in our conversations about the 10 Commandments. And we hope that is a helpful invitation to all of us listening that really

it's just—it's about waking up tomorrow, and just being like, "*Hmm, how could I live out that wisdom today? What's going to happen? I don't know. Let's get creative and—with the help of the Spirit.*"

Jon: Hey, speaking of the Spirit.

Tim: Whoa—

Jon: Next—

Tim: —I see what you're doing there.

Jon: Ah.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: What are we doing after 10 Commandments?

Tim: Mmm, we are doing a mega deep dive into the theme of the Spirit of God throughout the entire Bible.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And we made a video many years ago on the Holy Spirit. Kind of summarize those ideas. We're going to make a new one.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And yeah, think about all things Spirit in the Bible.

Jon: Yeah, I'm really excited about that, too. So next week we'll do another 10 Commandments special.

Tim: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Jon: Yeah. We're going to interview the art team behind the scenes.

Tim: Mhm.

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Jon: But then we'll go into the Spirit of God. So that'll be our next stop.

Tim: I'm really pumped.

[Musical break (1:00:15-1:00:18)]

Tim: Everybody, thank you for sending in your questions. So thoughtful. Really appreciate you on this learning journey with Jon and I.

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] Yes, thank you. And everything that we make here gets to be free because so many of you have decided to be part of this in funding it. Thank you for that. Everything that we make is to show that the Bible's a unified story that leads to Jesus.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah, also, this whole podcast is the result of a whole community of very creative human beings—

[Jon and Tim chuckle]

Tim: —each making their contribution to make this happen. And as always, for the list of all those humans' names so we can honor them and their contributions, you should check out the show notes in whatever your podcast viewing technology is. Thank you, guys, for listening. We love this. We'll keep doing more of it.

Jon: Until next time.

Tim: Yeah, we'll see you next time.

[BibleProject theme fades out]

[BibleProject sonic logo]