

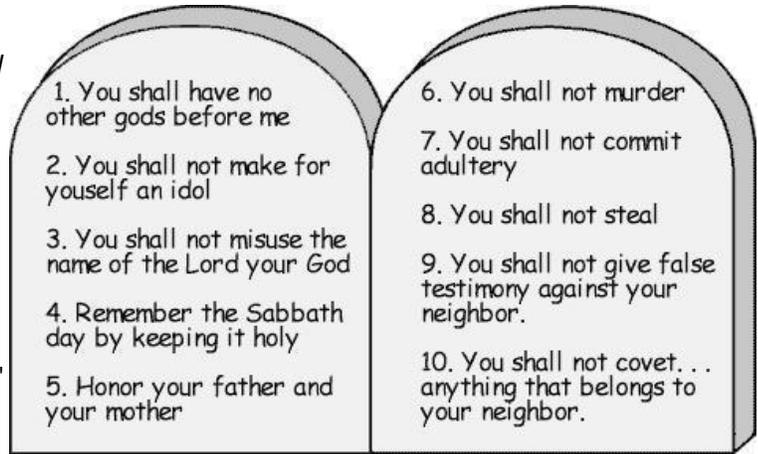
Numbering the Ten Commandments

A brief explanation from Neil MacQueen, Sunday Software,
of why they are numbered differently by different denominations.

Sunday Software's Ten Commandments CD uses the familiar
"Protestant-Orthodox-Reformed" of numbering the Ten Commandments.

The "Protestant-Orthodox-Reformed" numbering tradition separates "*you shall have no other gods...*" and "*you shall not make any graven images*" into TWO separate commandments (1 and 2). And it combines the "*do not covet neighbor's wife*" with "*do not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor*" into one commandment (the 10th).

The Roman Catholic Church and most Lutheran churches, *following Saint Augustine*, do the exact opposite. They combine "no other gods" with "no graven images" into the first commandment, and split "covet wife" and "covet neighbors..." into two commandments.



Indeed, many of our customers are surprised to learn that there ARE two different Christian traditions for numbering the commandments! Usually, our Lutheran customers never knew they were different from their other Reformed brothers and sisters.

The problem of commandment numbering goes far back in history. As early as the 3rd Century A.D., various Christian scholars, church leaders and denominations, differed in how they broke down the commandments by number.

The original Hebrew doesn't help. The commandments are not numbered in the manuscripts, and thus, the verses are not numbered 1-10 in most Bible translations. Rather, the organization of the verses into "ten" commandments was left up to scholars and churches.

Jewish tradition has the first commandment as "I am the Lord your God" which Reformed Christian scholars point out is not a commandment, and thus, they consider it a "preface" as do the other Christian denominations. However, for someone memorizing the commandments, they may or may not be called upon to include the preface, -based on which tradition they are coming from. A Presbyterian, for example, would memorize the first commandment as only "You shall have no other gods before me."

The Roman Catholic and Lutheran tradition was to COMBINE "no other gods" and "not make for yourself an idol" into the first commandment.

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Division of the Ten Commandments by religion/denomination

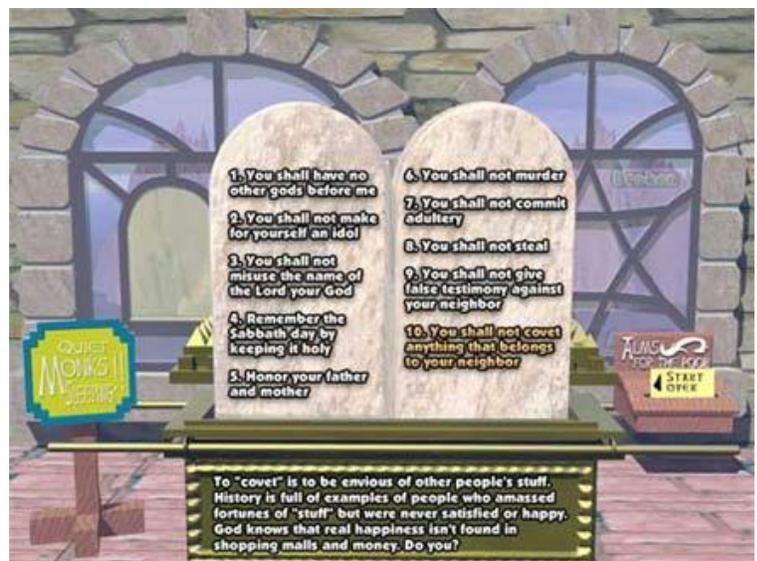
Commandment	Jewish (Talmudic)*	Anglican, Reformed, and other Christian	Orthodox and other Christian	Roman Catholic, Lutheran**
I am the Lord your God	1	preface	1	1
You shall have no other gods before me		1		
You shall not make for yourself an idol	2	2	2	
Do not take the name of the Lord in vain	3	3	3	2
Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy	4	4	4	3
Honor your father and mother	5	5	5	4
You shall not kill/murder†	6	6	6	5
You shall not commit adultery	7	7	7	6
You shall not steal††	8	8	8	7
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor	9	9	9	8
You shall not covet‡ your neighbor's wife	10	10	10	9
You shall not covet‡ anything that belongs to your neighbor				10

Pictured Right: One of the 4 places in our Ten Commandments CD where students encounter the commandments. The pop-up Ark of the Covenant found in the monastery at Mt Sinai in the program has rollover texts so the kids hear each commandment and see a brief explanatory note about each. Behind the Ark is a stained glass wall which has videos of kids talking about the commandments.

To learn more about this wonderful teaching CD, go to www.sundaysoftware.com/tenbrief.htm

It has been said that the Orthodox and Reformed Churches choose to highlight the injunction against "idols" by breaking it apart from the statement, "you shall have no other gods...." In effect, making two out of what could be argued is one. Why did those churches do that? Making "idols" its own commandment gave force to the Reformed arguments against Roman iconography, statuary, Mary worship and the veneration of saints.

Once the Roman Catholic and Lutheran tradition combined the first two commandments, they needed to break into two the last commandment to maintain a full 10 commandments. . Orthodox and Reformed Churches choose to keep both "covet" commandments (wife, and household) together as the 10th commandment because they both deal with "coveting."



Confession: Many of us have learned and smushed together BOTH numbering systems in our memories. For example, many know the 6th Commandment from popular culture as the prohibition against adultery. Yet in 3 of the 4 traditions it's listed as the 7th commandment. I've always called it the 6th Commandment (because I picked it up somewhere that way, perhaps from a teacher or movie) --even though I follow the Reformed numbering which lists it as the 7th.

Here's an additional chart in a different translation...

	Jewish Numbering	Augustine-Luther Numbering (many Roman Catholic churches and most Lutheran churches)	Orthodox-Reformed Numbering (and most other Protestant churches)
Introduction	And God spoke all these words, saying,	And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God."	And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God."
1st Word	"I am the LORD your God."	"You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image"	"You shall have no other gods before me."
2nd Word	"You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image."	"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain."	"You shall not make for yourself a graven image."
3rd Word	"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain."	"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."	"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain."
4th Word	"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."	"Honor your father and your mother."	"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."
5th Word	"Honor your father and your mother."	"You shall not kill."	"Honor your father and your mother."
6th Word	"You shall not kill."	"You shall not commit adultery."	"You shall not kill."
7th Word	"You shall not commit adultery."	"You shall not steal."	"You shall not commit adultery."
8th Word	"You shall not steal."	"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."	"You shall not steal."
9th Word	"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."	"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife."	"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."
10th Word	"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire anything that is your neighbor's."	"You shall not desire anything that is your neighbor's."	"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire anything that is your neighbor's."

Now... how many of you knew the Ten Commandments appear in two slightly different versions in the Bible? Compare Exodus 20 to Deuteronomy 5! Deuteronomy has many additional words inserted in the "Sabbath" commandment, expanding on Exodus 20's "livestock" to also include "or your ox or your donkey". Kind of interesting why they did that!