

## Framework for Interpreting and Applying the Law:

**What does the command teach us about God? What does the command reveal about ourselves?**

1. **Remember** the prelude to the giving of the law: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out the land of slavery.” Exodus 20:2

Ask: How does the truth of the prelude provide a lens through which to view the command?

2. **Recognize** the greater context of the law (*biblical rule*).

Ask: How does the whole of scripture inform/influence my understanding of the command?

3. **Evaluate** both the hands and the heart (*inside/out rule*).

Ask: What would obedience look like at both the hands and heart level?

Puritan proverb: “Man’s law binds the hands only, God’s law binds the heart.” (p. 44, Ryken)

4. **Realize** that each command has a stated and implicit aspect (+/-) (*the two-sided rule*).

Ask: What does the command forbid? What does the command require? (What should we do? What should we *not* do?)

5. **Acknowledge** that the depth of the command extends beyond the tip of the iceberg being stated – not only the big sins matter, but also those that lead toward them (*the law of categories*).

Ask: How can I appreciate this command as a category of sins/commands related to the stated command?

6. **Realize** that we are called to obedience as a community and as a people of God. We are called to “spur one another on to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24) and are told that, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” (Prov. 27:17) (*the brother’s keeper rule*)

Ask: Am I so centered on self that I shy away from seeing how I may be called to support others in collectively upholding this command?

7. **Understand** that there is a type of hierarchy in the commands such that the first commands dealing with our duty to God take precedence over the commands dealing with our duty to fellow man (*the hierarchy rule*).

Ask: Would obedience to this command violate another command? Which is of greater obligation? (“We must obey God rather than men.” Acts 5:29)

8. **Agree** that we cannot perform every positive duty simultaneously, though all prohibited actions should be avoided at all times (*the all-at-once rule*).

9. **Live out** the commands remembering that “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10), such that our obedience to any/all of the commands is ultimately for the sake of God (*the rule of love*).

\*\*\* “So what is the point of looking at God’s law in exhaustive detail? Isn’t that legalistic? On the contrary, it is when we have a limited understanding of the law that we are most tempted to legalism, because then we think that we can keep it.” (Ryken p. 53)