**Series Slide**

AJ Jacobs is an “immersion journalist”. ([*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A.\_J.\_Jacobs*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._J._Jacobs)) *(*[*https://www.ted.com/talks/a\_j\_jacobs\_year\_of\_living\_biblically#t-223254*](https://www.ted.com/talks/a_j_jacobs_year_of_living_biblically#t-223254)*)*

That just means that when he writes, he puts himself in the middle or the people or idea he is writing about to fully experience it. Then he writes an article or a book about what he learned.

For example, in 2004, AJ Jacobs read all the volumes of the Encyclopedia Brittanica. He wrote about it in his book called “The Know it All: One Man’s Humble Quest to Become the Smartest Person in the World.”

He wrote an article called “My outsourced life” Where, for a month, he hired a team of people in Bangalore India to answer his phone, argue with his wife, and read his kids bedtime stories.

He also wrote an article for Esquire magazine, on “Radical Honesty”. The idea was that he just said everything that came to mind. There was no hiding anything. He just said everything that he thought out loud. The title of the article was called “I think you’re fat” And he said it was the worst month of his life.

But, of all the immersive journalism experiments that AJ Jacobs has tackled, he says the most profound and life-changing one was the one he did in 2007, where he tried to follow every command of the Bible.

From it, he wrote a book called “[*The Year of Living Biblically: One Man’s Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Year_of_Living_Biblically)

* As a secular Jew, Jacobs was never religious and wanted to know what it was like to be a religious fundamentalist…and actually take all the commands of the Bible seriously.
* So he went to work. He didn’t cut the corners of his beard, or wear clothes with mixed fibers. One time, he even followed a command to stone an adulterer by throwing tiny pebbles at a 70 year old man who admitted adultery.
* The man ripped the rocks from his hand, and threw them back in AJ’s face…at which point he did the same thing back to the man to follow the “Eye for an Eye” command.
* He even rented some sheep so he could obey commands about being a shepherd and blew a shofar to hail taxi cabs in Manhattan.
* Here’s AJ in the middle of his immersive journalism. **(Show Pic)**
* 
* Dude, lived like this for a year!
* Now, let me ask you…do you resonate a little bit with AJ?
* When you think about the Old Testament…the law of God…does it seem a little silly…a little outdated… to actually obey it?
* And…clearly…I would venture to say that none of us are even TRYING to follow all the commands?
* So, what gives? Am I just a hypocritical biblical-literalist that needs to get with the program?
* Should I take AJ Jacobs advice and approach the Bible like a cafeteria, just picking and choosing what parts make sense to me and discarding with the rest of it?
* What even are the points of the commands in the Bible…and are they to be followed?
* **Title Slide- “Wedding on the Mountain: How God’s Law is More Like Marriage Than Congress”- Exodus 20:1-6**
* Back in the early fall, we made our way through the first 19 chapters of the book of Exodus…the story of the Hebrew people being rescued out of slavery by God and under the leadership of Moses.   
    
  When we last left them in October, Moses and the Israelites were at the Edge of Mt Sinai…and God had just called Moses up a thundering and firey Mountain because he had something he wanted Moses to take to all the people.
* Over the next several weeks we are going to pause right there with Moses and the Hebrew people…at Mt Sinai. Because what comes down off that Mountain are the 10 commandments…the most recognizable code of ethics in the history of mankind. …
* But…are they more than that?
* We’re going to read all of the commandments today in their full context… though I won’t explain all these verses today, I want you to be familiar with them…
  + BTW, I won’t have time today to answer the big question that I am sure many of you have… “Why do we obey SOME of the laws in the OT and not ALL of them…”, if you’re wondering why I don’t have a beard, or why I’m happy to eat shellfish and pork and still not throw rocks at adulterers… but still I am FOR keeping the 10 Commandments and many other of God’s laws, …I’ll post that in detail this week on the City Church blog. Just don’t have time to get there today.
* **Exodus 20:1-21**
* **And God spoke all these words, saying,**
* **“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.**
* **“You shall have no other gods before me.**
* **“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.**
* **“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.**
* **“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.**
* **“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.**
* **“You shall not murder.**
* **“You shall not commit adultery.**
* **“You shall not steal.**
* **“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**
* **“You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.”**
* **Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.**

**Transition:** Today, I want to show you where AJ Jacobs missed it. That God’s Law, his commandments, are not simply an ethical code…rather, they let us see the beauty of God…and they point us to our freedom.

Today, we’re gonna take a look at the first 2 commands, because the first two commands are not just commands…they also summarize the purpose of ALL the other ones.

See…

**1) Mt. Sinai is more like a wedding than a session of congress.**

* + I think one of the mistakes people often make about the 10 commandments…and all the laws that follow them…is we see them as some arbitrary restrictions.
  + As if God was just assigning Israel some busy work.
  + In fact, a lot of the way Xians talk about the law is as if its this ugly skeleton in our closet…its like a crazy relative that you don’t want any of your friends to meet.
  + But that doesn’t seem to be the way that the writers of Scripture thought about it.
  + Here’s King David in **Psalm 1:1a-2**
  + **Blessed is the man who walks not in counsel of the wicked…but his delight is in the law of the LORD and on his law he meditates day and night.**
  + Or take the Apostle Paul in **Romans 7:12**

**the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.**

* + Or listen to Jesus in **Matthew 5:17-19**
  + **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**
  + See, to follow AJ Jacobs advice of picking and choosing which laws to follow doesn’t exactly sound like a good idea if I’m going to take Jesus seriously.
  + Jesus says…whoever relaxes even the least of these commandments will be called the least.
  + So what gives? Why do David, and Paul, and Jesus all look at the law so positively…so…beautifully…and when tend to see it as restrictive and embarrassing.
* **Back to 1)**
  + Well, it has a lot to do with the way you see Israel’s encounter at Mt. Sinai. Most of the time, we look at Mt. Sinai like we look at a session of congress. We see it primarily as legislative. As God passing out laws.
  + The problem with that, is that is not nearly personal enough.
  + That makes God feel primarily like a Senator, or a governor…instead of the way he is actually presenting himself…like a groom at a wedding.
  + Let me show you
  + **Exodus 20:2**
  + God doesn’t just start arbitrarily delivering these commands.
  + He does it in the context of WHO HE IS…and WHAT HE’S DONE.
  + Before he delivers any of this law he says, “I am the LORD your God”
  + Don’t lose the importance of that statement…because it changes EVERYTHING.
  + First, he uses his covenant name. that all caps word LORD is the word YHWH. It's the personal name God delivered to Moses in the burning bush.
  + It's the name that established an unending promise with his people.
  + Then the word God is ELOHIM. This invokes his power…his role as sovereign over the universe…the creator.
  + And then there is this crazy little word right in the middle…YOUR.
  + Think about that.
  + This is the sovereign ruler of the universe…looking at a people and NOT saying, “YOU ARE MINE. I OWN YOU.” Which, by the way, he has every right to do…
  + …instead he says “I AM YOURS!”
  + See, this is the way a wedding stars…not a session of congress.
  + The Speaker of the House never gets up and says, “Before we pass these laws, My name is Paul, and I am yours.”
  + BUT that does happen at a wedding.
  + When we say, “I am yours” what do we mean?
  + **We mean, “I am at your disposal.”**
  + We mean, “I am not protecting myself from you…instead I’m willing to make myself vulnerable to love and serve you.”
  + And after a wedding, what’s the next step?
  + Well, its to expose yourselves to one another.
  + Its to up the intimacy.
  + To get naked.
  + To totally expose yourselves to one another.
  + And that’s exactly what God is doing in the law.
  + He is showing us what he is like.
  + Especially in the 10 commandments…God is not simply saying “Follow these rules”…he is saying to Israel…and to us…I am Yours…and he’s exposing himself.
  + I am a God who values honor and respect, but also intimacy…I am God who values hard diligent work, but also rest.
  + I am a God who values human life…I created it…and I’m also a God who loves faithfulness.
  + I am a God who is truth…and in me, you’ll find the contentment that keeps you from chasing other things to fulfill you.
  + To look into the 10 commandments is to look at a groom opening himself up to his bride. It's the God of the cosmos coming to a people that he is unconditionally uniting himself with and saying, “This is who I am.”
  + Not only that…but you always make provisions for the one’s you love to flourish.
  + A good marriage has a husband and wife who want to see the other person grow and flourish.
  + …and that’s what these commandments are, too. They are the way to human flourishing.
  + Don’t we all recognize that about morality?
  + Can you imagine a society where stealing, and lying, and murder was a moral good?
  + You know what we would look like?
  + We would be a phenomenally self-centered and self-protective people. We could never really love other people because we would always feel the need to protect ourselves from attacks.
  + We would never really love others because we would feel like we would never have enough for ourselves.
  + You know, if my neighbor gets ahead by stealing and murdering, I better beat him to it.
  + But because God cares about us, because he loves us…he wants us flourish…
  + …so the law is not a bunch of arbitrary restrictions…as David writes in Psalm one…the man who delights in the law…in all that he does…he prospers.
* Now, there’s one more bit of marriage talk that goes on here.
  + Look at the end of the 2nd commandment.
  + **20:5**
  + **…I the LORD your God am a jealous God,**
  + After God gives commands to not worship any other gods, and not to make graven images or idols…he gives the reason…
  + …and he says its because he is jealous.
  + Notice, he repeats the way he starts the law.
  + With his covenant name….and his covenant relationship…
  + I am the LORD YOUR GOD…SO I am jealous.
  + Now, does that sit a little funny.
  + Don’t you think of jealousy as a bad thing.
  + In fact, in the 9th commandment, God tells us not to covet, which is kind of like jealousy…
  + …and all through the Bible, old and new testaments, jealousy is spoken of negatively…so what gives?
  + A few years ago, Oprah Winfrey was talking about why she left the Christian faith that she was raised in…here’s what she said
  + **“I took God out of the box because I grew up in the Baptist church and their rules, and belief systems and doctrine. I happened to be sitting in church in my late twenties. I was going to a church where you had to get there at 8 o’clock in the morning or you couldn’t get a seat … a very charismatic minister where everybody is into the sermon. This great minister was preaching on how great God was and how omniscient and omnipresent and God is everything and then he said, ‘the Lord thy God is a jealous God.’ I was caught up in the rapture of that moment until he said ‘jealous,’ and something struck me. .. I’m thinking, ‘God is all. God is omnipresent. And God is also jealous?’ God is jealous of me? And something about that didn’t feel right in my spirit… and that is where the search for something more than doctrine started to stir within me.”- Oprah Winfrey**
  + Did you hear that? Oprah left Xianity because she understood God’s jealously to be God looking at her going… “I want something you have”.
  + But that is not the sort of jealousy this is.
  + **20:5 (don’t read)**
  + **…I the LORD your God am a jealous God,**
  + If I’m in the grocery store with my wife, and we’re standing in the check out line, and I notice some guy isn’t just checking out his groceries…but he is also checking out my wife…
  + What do you expect me to do as a good husband?
  + I’m probably going to stand in between this guy and my wife.
  + Now, imagine the guy walks up to her and puts his arm around her and begins to grab her and whisper sweet little promises in her ear like, “Hey honey, you’re beautiful…and I make twice as much money as your husband…I can give you whatever you want…and if you’ll just come home with me, I’ll take you away from all the pressures of being a pastor’s wife, and a mom, and I’ll move you to a little town in southern Italy where you never have to worry about anything else…”
  + Now, what am I gonna say…besides “Take me!”
  + No…what am I gonna say to this joker in this moment.
  + Well, I’m going to be jealous for my wife.
  + I’m going to be angry with the lies she’s being told, the false promises that are being made…and I’m going to say, “She is mine, I am hers, and I want you let you run off with her. Back off!”
  + And if my wife looks at me and says, “I don’t know…southern Italy?!?!”
  + I’m going to say, “No…you can’t go. I love you…and that man can’t give you what I can give you…he can’t give you me!”
  + Now, THAT is jealousy.
  + That is an angry LOVE that STAYS love.
  + See, often the problem with human jealousy, is that it CAN begin as an angry love, but then it turns into angry hate…or self-protection.
  + See, in that moment in the grocery store with my wife, there’s a part of me that wants to hit that guy in the mouth because I want to protect my image. I don’t want to look inferior. I don’t want to look like second best. In that moment, its not so much about my love for her…but about my love for ME.
  + But Godly jealousy is love that turns angry and never moves into self-protection. Godly jealousy is angry love that STAYS love.
  + …and that’s the way God feels about Israel…and that’s the way he feels about you.
  + God’s jealousy is not a reason to run AWAY from God like Oprah…its one of his most beautiful characteristics…it's a reason to run to him.
* **Transition:** See, No one can love you like God can…that’s why these first two commandments, and really all the other 8, are all about keeping you from idolatry. Because…
* **2) Idolatry is adultery…and its everywhere.**
  + When I heard that AJ Jacobs say he spent a year obeying all the commands in the Bible, I was pretty curious about he obeyed the first and second commands.
  + **20:3-5**
  + No amount of dedication to immersive journalism can allow a person who doesn’t even believe God exists to obey these commands.
  + So, AJ Jacobs just obeyed them externally.
  + He went through the motions of talking about God like he was real, he made sure he didn’t make a little idol out of wood or stone and bow down to it…
  + …and so, he thought he was obeying these commandments.
  + But each of the 10 commandments mean more than just what’s on the face of them.
  + Remember, they are exposing God’s beauty and his character to us.
  + …and they are given in the context of a covenant marriage relationship… they aren’t given as cold legislation, but an act of loving intimacy.
  + That means that it makes complete sense that when all through the bible the subject of idolatry comes up, it is most of the time referred to as adultery…cheating on God.
  + Here's an example in from **James 4:2a & 4**
  + **You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.** **… You adulterous people!**
  + See, James gives examples of 2 ways people in the church are breaking the 10 commandments…coveting and murdering…and then he says, “You adulterous people!”
  + But when he does that, he’s not saying, you murder and covet…oh and you also are cheating on your spouses.
  + No, this is collective.
  + He is saying BECAUSE you COVET…and BECAUSE you murder…those are the things that MAKE all of you together…an adulterous people.
  + See the church is called the BRIDE of Christ.
  + …and the way that bride cheats is by listening to the sweet promises of other lovers that say, “Run away with me…I’ll give you everything HE CAN’T…I’ll make it easy on you…I’ll take you to a place where the pressures off…”
  + And it's the goodness and the beautiful jealous angry love of God to step in between us and that lying tempter to say to us, “Don’t you see I love you… Don’t you see these idols promises are all lies. And That you may be able to live in southern Italy with a boatload of money…but you won’t have me…and that’s the point.”
  + **20:4**
  + …and notice the plethora of options for idols.
  + See, idols aren’t just little statues that you bow down to….and they aren’t inherently evil things…
  + An idol is ANYTHING that becomes the object of your worship and affection.
  + And idol is ANYTHING that you put your trust in to save you.
  + And God is saying in the 2nd commandment, there is no limit to the number of idols you can find…they are in the sky, on the earth and in the water. You will be tempted to replace me with ANYTHING I created.
  + Think about that idea of a carved image.
  + Remember in Genesis when God created humans.
  + He carved us into HIS image.
  + The work of God was to take the dirt he had made and make it into something that looked like him.
  + But, the way we reject God, is to take the same dirt, something God created, and make that into a god.
  + Not making a graven image doesn’t necessarily or mainly mean “don’t draw a picture of God”…it means don’t take things God created and substitute them for God.
  + **“Idolatry is worshiping anything that ought to be used, and using anything that ought to be worshiped.”- St. Augustine**
  + In other words, instead of worshiping god, we use him to get what we really think will love us and give us beauty.
  + Let me share a couple of examples with you.
  + Lets start with marital adultery….or any sex outside of marriage.
  + When you have sex outside of marriage, on one hand you are using God, you are receiving a good gift from him…another human being created in his image…and sex…a good gift from God meant to cement a covenant promise between a husband and wife…but you aren’t going to use it like that.
  + Instead, you are going make it your salvation.
  + “My marriage is hell, so I need to be saved by this other lover”
  + or
  + “Even though God says it will hurt me and him, I’m going to have sex before I’m married because it will help me keep this other person around…and I need them. Or because It feels so good, and I need sexual pleasure or I’m not really living.”
  + See, your beauty and your salvation is completely being derived from the idol of sex, or a relationship with another person that is NOT the very jealous God.
  + Or take eating disorders.
  + When you bow to the desires of an eating disorder, you are saying, “I have to have control of my image”.
  + Instead of submitting control to God, and eating the way he made you to eat…your God is control. Your God is to see yourself the way you think you should be seen.
  + So, you use God, you take the body he gave you, but you don’t care for it the way he called you to....because that doesn’t give you enough control.
  + So you make that control over your body your image…all the while its actually killing you.
  + That control has become your graven image…your god...and your entire life is bowing to it.
  + Or take money…or power….or alcohol…or politics….or grades…or video games…or career success…
  + **[LOUD]** Or any of the bazillion things that God created for us to use to love and serve him with…
  + **[QUIET & SLOW]** and instead we hear them whisper to us, “Serve me and I’ll take the pressure off. Serve me and I’ll give you everything…Come away with me, give yourself to me and I’ll make your dreams come true.”
* **Back to 2)**
  + …but they’re all liars.
  + They can’t love you like a jealous God can.
  + They’ve never really said to you “I am yours”…
  + …they only use you…and spit you out when they get tired of you.
  + Ask an alcoholic how great a god alcohol has been.
  + Ask a serial adulterer how great a god sex has been.
  + Ask someone who has chased money all their lives how much money satisfies them.
  + Ask someone who chases success how they feel when they fail.
  + See, with idols, the promises are big on the front end, but in the end, you end up used…and you hurt a ton of people in the process.
  + That’s a part of the reason for the last half of **v 5b**
  + You might say, Why does god visit the sin of the parents on the kids and grandkids…that's not fair.
  + You’re right, its not. It's the natural breakdown of life that comes with sin.
  + Doesn’t a parents adultery always hurt the kids?
  + No matter what spin you put on it, when a Mom and Dad are unfaithful to each other…the kids feel the weight of it…and it breaks them.
* **Back to 2)**
  + Committing adultery on a fiercely loving God will ALWAYS ALWAYS ALWAYS break you…and the people you love.
* **TRANSITION:** And that brings me to the best part of the law.

**3) The best part of the law is what it can’t do.**

* + Sounds kind of funny to say…but that really is the best part.
  + In fact, just before Paul says in Romans 7 that the lawa is holy and righteous and good…look what he says!
  + **Romans 7:10-12**
  + **The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.**
  + Paul says, without the law, without knowing what God wanted for me…I wouldn’t have really understood how deceptive and destructive sin is. I wouldn’t have ever really known that being separated from this God that loves me was bad.
  + So in this weird sort of way, Paul is saying, the most beautiful things about these commands is it showed me how evil and wicked my heart is. It showed me that I am an adulterer.
  + Of course, Jesus did this with the law when he came.
  + **Matt 5:21-22**
  + He went to the religious elite who thought they were keeping all the 10 commandments and he said, “You’ve heard it said, Don’t Murder, but I tell you if you have hated someone, you’ve killed them. You’ve broken the command.
  + **Matt 5:27**
  + He said, “You’ve heard it said “Don’t commit adultery”, but I’m telling you if you have lusted, you have cheated on God. You’ve broken the commandment.
  + Jesus didn’t come saying, “WHO HAS BEEN MORAL…I’ll let you come into the kingdom of heaven.”
  + Instead he came telling the most moral people, “Don’t you see, you are guilty of spiritual adultery and you stand under God’s judgment.”
  + See, so many people live their lives trying to figure out a way to obey God’s commands so God will finally say, “I love you and you are mine”
  + **Exodus 20:2**
  + But before you can ever even obey a command, before God even gives a single one of these commands to Israel, he says, “I love you, I am fierecely and jealously committed to you, and I am yours”
  + He doesn’t say, “Here’s the list of how I will save you”
  + He starts with I AM THE GOD WHO ALREADY HAS RESCUED YOU OUT OF SLAVERY…now, watch me give myself to you.
  + The great mystery is this…why would God give us commands that he knew we couldn’t keep?
  + …and you find the answer on the cross.
  + See, the cross of Jesus is where we truly understand the jealousy of God.
  + The cross is where the angry love of God stayed love.
  + It didn’t turn into self-protection or self-preservation…
  + …instead, in Jesus death, God himself paid the price for our sin.
  + He took the judgment of our iniquity…it was visited on him.
  + On the cross, all the unwinding and death and destruction that idolatry brings…was nailed into his hands and feet.
  + When we get married and I say “I am yours, I am at your disposal, we don’t literally mean…Do whatever you will to me.”
  + But when God said it to us…he meant it.
  + And he became one of us in Christ…and he allowed us to kill him…because we thought something else would save us.
  + But in a turn of events only a Jealous God could bring about, through Christ’s death, our price was paid…we were redeemded from the judgment of our sin…
  + …and in Jesus resurrection, we are led into the kingdom of Heaven
  + The gospel is that Jesus lived, died and resurrected to make us the beautiful faithful bride he created us to be.
  + **Eph 5:25-27**
  + **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.**
  + See, its not our work to obey that makes us holy…its Christ work to redeem us, wash us, and make us holy and blameless because he perfected obeyed the law for us…and took our blemishes on him.
* **Back to 3)**
  + See, the reason AJ Jacobs never experienced the deepest beauty of the law, is because, unlike Paul, he didn’t see in it his need for God’s grace.
  + Instead, he just saw a list of rules to pick and choose from.
  + He didn’t see himself as a sinner, he saw himself as a god, that could decide what REALLY brings human flourishing.
  + The law only affirmed his self-sufficiency…
  + …and if that’s all you see…then you find yourself in the company of the Pharisees...to whom Jesus said, “Woe to you. Judgment is coming.”
  + But, when your eyes are opened to see that all the law is showing you the beauty of God, and all the ways you lack that beauty…you’ll finally see that Jesus didn’t come mainly as a teacher of morals…but as the only way to find life in the God that gave himself to you before you could ever pledge yourself to him
  + In the end, the title of AJ Jacobs’ book was a misnomer.
  + …because he didn’t really “live biblically”
  + “living biblically” means to put all your trust in Christ for your salvation, to treasure him as your God, to know and be known by the God who loves you jealously…
  + …and that’s something that simply following commands will never do for you.