

GOD'S OPINION - 1

Quite a number of my former parishioners liked the image of church as a “Filling station”. They saw it as a place to come and be “filled,” as if we were cars. They were not trying to avoid God. It was quite the opposite! They wanted to get just close enough to God to get “filled” with whatever they needed to cope with the world until next Sunday.

What they did not want was for the preacher to make life more complicated. One of the ways that some of us preachers make life more complicated is when we try to help people recognize that God has an opinion about everything.

Maybe you want to remind me that God does not have opinions. God has the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20](#) & [Deuteronomy 5](#)) to guide our behavior. As long as we follow those we will be good Christians. Isn't that true? No, actually, it isn't. It is more than possible to faithfully live by the Ten Commandments and not be a Christian.

“
*Let not the opinions of
man interfere with the
directions given to you by
God*
”

- Author Unknown -

We could be atheists, agnostics, Unitarian-Universalists as well as humanists and benefit from using the 10 Commandments to guide our lives.

If we don't believe in God we would set aside commandments # 1-3. They have to do with our relationship with God (i.e. No other Gods before me, No idols and No taking the Lord's name in vain). While the next seven commandments remind us of attitudes and behaviors to avoid, they also offer a very helpful set of boundaries within which we can live as part of a stable society.

So, that's it? Ten or maybe even just seven commandments and we're done? No, it's more complicated than that. According to the Bible, God has a lot to say about what God expects of us. If you're not sure where in the Bible to look, read Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In the New Testament consider [Matthew 5:1-12](#) (the Beatitudes) as well as [Ephesians 5:21-33](#), [Colossians 3:18-25](#) and [1 Peter 3:1- 9](#)—all lists of rules to live by. Nor is that a complete list of God's hopes for us.

Do we really want to know God's opinions, too? “Probably not” is my guess. Most of us don't want God to “meddle” by confronting us with what it really means to Love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. After all, God might have an opinion about sharing what we have—even more than giving 10% of our income. Or God might call us to forgive and even pray for our enemies! Worse yet, God may expect us to love our enemies! In contemporary terms, God is quite likely expecting us to love people who are immigrants (documented and undocumented), Muslims and peoples of all faiths, the homeless who approach us on the street even when we're driving, the addicted person, the people inside and those released from prison and even more!

Jesus had quite a lot to say about loving people, and he was not shy about telling the people of his day that they needed to stop their hypocrisy and live in ways that welcome every person as a co-member of God's realm (“on Earth as . . . in heaven”).

And how do we cope with all of this? Well, we can always decide that we don't believe in God. If we can't shake out belief in God, then we can decide that God is too busy to listen to all of our requests. We can also ignore primary sources of information and experience about what God's opinion is any number of subjects. We do that when we avoid studying (Yes, "studying") the Bible and the teachings of the Church over 2000 years. We can refuse to examine these sources by critiquing them so persistently that we devalue them as sources of God's Word. We may also overlook the lessons learned by our ancestors in the Christian faith of what God expects from us. When those approaches don't work, we may decide that God is so far away that God doesn't really about what happens on Earth.

Tsk! Tsk! It's amazing how many ways we avoid dealing with God and God's opinions. Maybe we need to consider the possibility that God is closer to us than our own breath! That would mean that God loves us with such deep awareness of what we need that God is constantly suggesting decisions for us to make that will bring us closer to God's love.

God cares so deeply about each of us that God wants the very best for us and from us. We are no more and no less special to God than anyone else. God created all of us, and God has a plan for every part of God's creation. Of course, that's just my opinion. God's opinion is the one we need to listen for, understand and ultimately accept!

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