

**God's Plan  
for Us:**

**Live His  
Pattern**



**Teaching  
the Way of Love**

*because humanity passes by way of the family . . .*

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**PLEASE PRAY  
THAT**

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will intentionally live the Ten Commandments this school year.
- Parents will take extra time to pray with and for their children during this school year.
- Families will work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will learn thankfulness for the blessings they have and avoid greed for the things they don't.
- Parents will witness a visible love for God and for others in a way that their children will desire to replicate.
- Love and mercy will be abundantly shown within every family.
- No child (or parent) will ever feel they are beyond God's love and mercy.

## Faithfulness to God

Parents want what's best for their children. And the desire to give our children the best goes beyond providing for our children's physical needs. As Catholic parents, we know that ultimately giving our children what is best means helping them to develop an intimate relationship with God and to learn how to acquire all of the goodness and love He wants us to have. This means we should teach are children about the 10 commandments which describe God's pattern of love for us.

What makes the commandments such a great place to start? Saint Pope John Paul II calls the 10 Commandments the *beginning* of love. Let's begin with the first commandment and see what it tells us about loving God and becoming the best we can be.



**The first Commandment is, "I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods beside me."**

For the Hebrew people who first received the 10 Commandments from God, this Commandment was very literal. They were pagans who believed there were multiple gods. Religion, to them, meant manipulating the gods in order to get what they wanted. God's first command was meant to teach the Hebrew people first that He was the only God, and second that He wanted them to love Him rather than use him to get something (BTW—this is what he wants from us as well.)

Modern Catholics may not struggle with worshipping more than one God. We understand that "the Lord is God, there is no other" (Deuteronomy 4:39 ). But, if we're not careful we can still treat God like the pagans did—using Him instead of loving Him. For example, we can ignore God until we need something

***Because humanity passes by way of the family...***

or pray only when we want to ask God for something. Often our secular concerns—money, work, entertainment, our social life—push God out of the center of our lives. When God isn't at the center of our life, we aren't following the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment. And when we miss the mark on this command, we are likely to do the same with the remaining nine.

What will it take to put God in the middle of everything we do? Develop your virtue. This means that you will form firm habits to do what is right and good. Virtues govern our actions so that we can follow God's commands and find joy in leading a morally good life.

Believe it or not, there are specific virtues that can be paired with each commandment. Which ones goes with the First Commandment? The first is the **virtue of fidelity** which is also called faithfulness. We practice fidelity when we make commitments to our relationship with God. Common commitments include daily prayer, frequent reception the Sacraments, reading Scripture and daily acts of sacrifice. Just as in marriage, daily small acts of commitment—especially acts of sacrifice—are clear signs that we mean what we say.

**Spiritual childhood** is another virtue that helps us to live the First Commandment. The first element of spiritual childhood is complete trust in God that leads us to give ourselves entirely to Him without reserve. The second element of spiritual childhood is humility and meekness—to not seek earthly power or gain for ourselves but instead to seek the good of others.

## Encourage the Virtues of Fidelity & Spiritual Childhood

1. Read Bible stories about miracles to your children each day. Talk about the Glory of God.
2. Make a promise jar into which family members can write an action that they will do for God. Examples might include saying certain prayers, donating time or money to a charity, visiting a holy place, giving up media time...
3. Foster an "attitude of gratitude" among your children. Take time before bed to thank God for the blessings of the day.
4. Practice with your children saying, "God's will be done" when you're hoping for something good.
5. When you pray with your children, let them see your confidence in God and your assurance that your Heavenly Father hears you and wants what is best for you.

This challenge is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit [www.twl4parents.com](http://www.twl4parents.com) for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at [www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love](http://www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love).