



The Level **by Joe Sixpack**

A little boy was watching his father work as he was building a piece of furniture. The man was using a level to make certain the board he was planing was straight. The little boy thought this was fascinating, but also a lot of extra work.

“What’s the use of being so careful, Dad? That board looks all right.”

“Guessing won’t do when building furniture, Son,” his father explained. “You have to be spot-on; otherwise, your job will be a failure. Many people guess at too many things.”

“What kind of things, Dad?”

“At living the right way, for instance. They live the way they feel like living, and God doesn’t like that.”

“We ought to have a level to live by, don’t you think, Dad?”

“We do, Son! The commandments of God and of the Church is our level. Live according to that, and you won’t be taking chances with your soul. You can do a good job in life only if you use that level.”

God is the judge of the job we are doing in life. If you do His will and follow His directions, He will be pleased with your job and reward you. The directions that show His will are the Ten Commandments and the Commandments of the Church. They tell you how to love God, your neighbor, and yourself. They are the level of living right.

Obviously, I want to write today about living for God, according to His holy will. But first, I want to dwell on a few observations I’ve made in my own walk with God to help us better understand His immensity and power.

I’m a guy. Most of us guys aren’t particular fans of pastels in our clothing or our favorite art. There’s nothing wrong with pastels, but men usually have little or no use for them. I’m probably a little more extreme than most guys, as I genuinely hate pastels. I do; I absolutely hate them. Yet, God always does a magnificent job with pastels. Have you ever bothered to give thought to the brilliance and beauty of a sunrise or sunset? Since I had a stroke and now spend a great deal of time in my wheelchair on our home’s deck, I also spend a lot of time watching sunrises and sunsets. God is the only artist I know of (and I know a bit about art) who can take pastels—the only colors making up a sunrise or sunset—and make them breathtakingly gorgeous. Imagine an Artist with a canvas as big as the entire sky!

Before the stroke, I was like the dad in our story, as I used to build and carve furniture. My favorite woods to work with were figured maple, cherry, and walnut. I would take each and every piece of wood and look closely at the grain, texture, color and character flaws to decide where each piece should be arranged in my furniture project. Each piece of wood has its own unique characteristics, and each piece has its own immense beauty. Sometimes I would think about how God allowed the tree that piece of wood came from to germinate thirty or forty or fifty

years earlier, and that in His eternal mind He knew that I'd one day be holding that piece of wood and thinking about how I would best showcase His handiwork in my furniture. He knew what I would build and with which piece of wood before I was even a furniture maker or the tree was even a sapling! I guess He made at least part of the tree for me.

I was on the back deck one day, and there had been a plane in the sky doing some lovely skywriting. There was a streak here and a streak there. It was both intricate and appealing to look at. Then there was an apparent shift in the wind at a high altitude as the sun began to set. Gradually there formed the most beautiful dark blue and sunset-drenched clouds in the sky, as if they were a broad brush stroke from an artist's paintbrush. They were amazing! I recall laughing to myself. Here I had been admiring the work of that created skywriter, then it was as if God the Creator said, "You think that's something? Well, watch this!"

In each of these reflections are demonstrated the immensity and greatness of our Creator—the One who keeps all things in existence (including us) by simply keeping them in His eternal mind. So should we have any doubt that so great a God could ever possibly be anything less than perfectly merciful... and perfectly just?

A bad effect of Protestantism¹ on modern Catholics, made easy for us to accept because of our own fallen human nature, is the over-emphasis on God's mercy and forgiveness. I'm not saying we shouldn't talk about mercy and forgiveness; heavens no! We need mercy and forgiveness. But in Protestantism, especially the prevalent Fundamentalist school of thought, the theological idea is that we only have to accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior to get into heaven. Then we can do pretty much as we please because we're "covered by the blood" of Jesus. This is what they call "security to the believer". If this were true, by that logic, there was never a need for the Ten Commandments for Christians and the entire Old Testament is superfluous. Security to the believer and its implications for redemption and salvation pretty much make us all think that when we die we'll immediately be taking the Celestial Express to the Pearly Gates.

Will you really be saved when you die? How do you know? St. Paul told us to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Does that sound like a man who believes that going to heaven is a cakewalk? A God as immense and magnificent as ours doesn't waste time on anything. He has a purpose behind everything. When He gave us the Ten Commandments, and gave the Church the authority to make precepts that we must obey under pain of sin, He was foolish to do that if we're all automatically going to heaven.

Don't buy into the lies of the world that basically say if it feels good you should do it or you deserve it. Don't buy into the errors of Protestantism that give us the false assurance of salvation. The Catholic moral code must be obeyed, as your eternal destiny depends on it. **OBEY THE COMMANDMENTS AND THE CHURCH.** And in order to obey them, you must know them *as well as know all that they imply.*

As the little boy's dad said, "The commandments of God and of the Church is our level. Live according to that, and you won't be taking chances with your soul. You can do a good job in life only if you use that level." Make all the pieces of your life fit together like the pieces of a finely handcrafted piece of furniture. You will only find joy and contentment—even in times of hardship—living by the level. That's also the only way you can achieve heaven. This is What We Believe...Why We Believe It.

Got questions? Want to learn all about the commandments and what they imply? Come and visit JoeSixpackAnswers.com to learn more and ask all your questions. I'm always available.

¹ Every time I write about Protestantism and its errors, I get a lot of flack about my criticisms... or have it pointed out that the Church is not perfect and people like Luther were right to protest... or I get falsely accused of saying all Protestants are going to hell. If you're a Catholic and this applies to you, please take the trouble to learn the faith from authoritative and orthodox sources, then get over your politically correct self-loathing and start actually being Catholic. Either you're loyal to Jesus and the Church He founded or you're not. Just be honest enough to get off the fence.