

By
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Living On the Level

A little boy was watching his father using a level to see if the board he was planing was straight.

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

“Guessing won’t do in cabinet making work, Son,” his father explained. “You have to be just right; 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 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 this life only if you use that level.”

God is the judge of the job we’re doing in life. If you do His will and follow His directions, He’ll be pleased with your job and He’ll reward you. Those directions that show His will are the Ten Commandments and the Precepts of the Church—a mere clarification of the commandments. They tell you how to love God, your neighbor and yourself. They’re the level of living rightly.

I used to be a furniture maker, rightly called a cabinet maker. I suppose that’s why this story really had meaning for me. In cabinet making, everything must be *exactly* right. If a board is too short by a 64th of an inch, too thin by a 32nd of an inch, or the angle of a cut on the board is even one half degree off, the whole cabinet or piece of furniture looks and feels off. If the piece being built has a utilitarian purpose, being off will render the finished piece useless.

The father in this story was right about the same thing being true in life too. Early in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “You must be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48) In other words, Jesus is commanding us that we must become saints. Admittedly, that’s a life-long process. After all, you don’t just wake up one morning and declare yourself perfect... not honestly, anyway. So toward the ends of sanctity, He gave us what the dad called a level to live by. It’s actually an instruction manual for living. God is our divine life coach!

God tells us how to live on the level through His Ten Commandments. The first three commandments deal with man’s relationship to God. In other words, through these commandments God tell us what not to do. Some of the things God forbids us to do in these first three com-

mandments are: sacrilege, participating in certain acts of non-Catholic worship, profanity, and blasphemy.

The last seven of the commandments deal with man's relationship to both God and man. Some of the things forbidden here are: disobedience to legitimate authority, abortion, sterilization, fornication, contraception, homosexual activity, masturbation, pornography, living beyond our means, lying, flattery, and rash suspicion.

In my thirty years of sharing the faith, I've had many people (including a lot of Catholics) make statements to me similar to this: "If I did everything spelled out in the Ten Commandments, I'd never have any pleasure in life. Besides, the things I do aren't all that bad; God understands." That's a lie right out of the bowels of hell!

When we live in a chronic state of mortal sin, those pet sins we commit become an addiction—like a drug. Before I became a Catholic, I was so addicted to certain mortal sins that I came to see them as perfectly acceptable, and I thought I was living freely. Once I became a Catholic and learned how to shake those addictions, that was when I learned true liberty in life.

I can't pretend to know the state of each person's soul, but I can make a few presumptions based on the evidence I see. For example, I see Catholics in violation of modesty and purity every time I go to church, when I see the immodest and sexually provocative way people (particularly women) are dressed. In numerous surveys that protect anonymity, 90% of Catholics admit to using contraception, and seven out of ten Catholic men admit to using pornography. I assure you, God doesn't understand.

Jesus Christ, who is the second Person of the Trinity, God Himself, is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). That is because He is infinitely perfect. If He is the same yesterday, today and forever, His laws and commandments must also be the same yesterday, today and forever. So when nine out of ten Catholics admit to contraception, I can only assume those nine out of ten Catholics are bound for hell. That's not really surprising, though, because Jesus told us that *most* people will spend eternity in hell (Matthew 7:14).

What I do find surprising, though, is the level of deception and hypocrisy. It's one thing to lie to another person, but to lie to oneself and to God is beyond my own comprehension. Every Sunday at Mass (for those who even bother to go every Sunday, as God commands under pain of mortal sin), millions of Catholics recite the Nicene Creed, knowing the entire time that their recitation before All Mighty God is a lie. Those people don't believe. If they did, they'd obey God! Since they apparently don't, I don't understand how they can live a lie or continue to profess to be Catholic. After all, if you don't want to be a saint, why are you a Catholic?

To be fair about it, my experience from teaching the faith for thirty years is that quite often Catholics don't know what is sinful and what isn't. A devout Catholic mother taught her children the faith from my book *Secrets of the Catholic Faith*. She told me she had no idea that drunkenness is a sin until she read my book. I get why the vast majority of Catholics feel lost when deciding what is morally acceptable or unacceptable. Catechesis the past 50+ years has been so watered down that most Catholics have never really been taught the fullness of divinely revealed truth. There's a remedy, though. Visit my JoeSixpackAnswers.com website and register to get my free email course in your inbox every three days. You'll begin to receive personalized invitations to the free weekly webinars I host. Attend them to learn to live on the level.