

January 10, 2021

When I was 13 years old, in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I left my elementary school around 3:00 in the afternoon to walk home. We lived about one-and-a-half miles from the church school, and so most of the time I would walk to school. On this particular day it was cold, below freezing, and storming – a regular winter blizzard. The winds were high, whipping in from the west directly into my scarf wrapped face. It was a *really miserable day* for walking home. Less than an 1/8<sup>th</sup> of a mile into my trek, a car glided to a stop beside me and I was offered a ride. Shelter from the wind, the snow, the tiny pieces of hardened ice that swirled around in the air ... I have a perfect recollection of the person offering me this sanctuary—it is burned into my memory—Well dressed, well groomed, Caucasian male in his (shrug) late forties? Early fifties? He looked harmless and I, in my boots, and coat, and hand-knit mittens ... I was cold with over a mile to trudge.

I didn't even hesitate ... I thanked him ... and kept on walking.

Walking through the front door thirty minutes later never felt so good! Kicking out of my boots, tossing my snow caked hat, scarf and mittens to the floor, I hurried into the kitchen where heat emanated from our wood-burning stove.

I asked my mother, “did I do the right thing?” I thought it a fair question because ... he looked like a nice and decent person and the weather was really awful. I had *obeyed* my mother by not getting into that car with a stranger, and that obedience caused me to suffer in the cold, driving, miserable wind for longer than anyone would like.

Was that obedience *really* necessary?

Now ... there is no way of knowing for sure whether my obedience that day saved me from anything other than a warm ride home. I prefer, in fact, to believe that it was an offer from a benevolent man taking pity on a young child walking into the wind ... *but yes!! My mother assured me that I had made the right decision.* Her directive – not to get into a car with strangers -- was a **guide** to protect from hidden peril.

The rules didn't change just because my circumstances were difficult.

The point I am making is this: God knows we're down here in a blizzard and He knows we are on a journey home to Him. Out of His great love, His very character, He crafted a set of rules that we could use as a guide. A blueprint *to ensure that we would safely reach our destination.*

I grew up calling them “The Ten Commandments.” *Exodus 20:1-17*

We are saved by the grace of Jesus, not the ten commandments, but make no mistake. These commandments are absolutely a reliable compass with its True North pointing to heaven. They will guide us and keep us from being deceived or misled in a tumultuous, polarized world.

*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. Psalm 119:105*

*If you love me, keep my commandments. John 14:15*