"The Ten Things Every Child Can't *Not* Know"

by J. Budziszewski and Jim Burns, Ph.D

For thousands of years, philosophers have discussed and debated the idea of *natural law* – those precepts of right and wrong which are evident – even if suppressed – by all people regardless of culture and even apart from any faith commitment. The Apostle Paul seems to speak about this *natural law* when he claims in Romans 1:20, "For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities–his eternal power and divine nature–have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." As parents, we want our kids to recognize and affirm those basic natural laws – of knowing right from wrong. Since we are our children's most powerful influence in regards to establishing morals and values – we set the tone through our words and our actions. Recently, J. Budziszewski, professor of government and philosophy at the University of Texas published an excellent and important guide to these issues, entitled "What We Can't Not Know". In it, Budziszewski argues that within the Bible's 10 Commandments, we find the components of *natural law* presented in ideal form. The following is adapted from his book explaining the things we (and our children!) can't *not* know.

1) The point of the First Commandment (Deut. 5:6-10) is to teach your kids that there is one true God, and only the one true God, is to be worshipped as God.

2) The Second Commandment (Deut. 5:11) serves to encourage parents to teach children that it is wrong to use empty speech in connection with God. Our kids should learn that every form of light, careless, dishonest, contemptuous, hypocritical, or blasphemous speech about Him is wrong.

3) The Third Commandment (Deut. 5:12-14) declares that we are not to go about out lives in an unending mad rush while ignoring God. Our kids ought to learn that time is be set apart just for the remembrance of God. Other things are important, but God is more important than everything else.

4) The point of the Fourth Commandment (Deut. 5:16) is that kids must learn that God has given parents authority over them. To dishonor parental authority dishonors God.

5) In the Fifth Commandment (Deut. 5:17) kids will learn the proper respect for life. Murder is wrong. No one may deliberately take innocent human life.

6) The Sixth Commandment (Deut. 5:18) forbids any married person from having sexual relations with anyone but his or her spouse. Parents are to teach their children that the integrity of the family must be protected.

7) In the Seventh Commandment (Deut. 5:19), respect for personal property is declared to be important. Parents should teach their kids that stealing property from another is wrong.

8) The Eighth Commandment (Deut. 5:20) is often misunderstood. The Commandment against bearing false witness isn't teaching only against lying, but rather lying to get someone in trouble. Telling the truth and the integrity of public justice are virtues parents will do well to teach their kids.

9) The Ninth Commandment (Deut. 5:21a) takes the Sixth Commandment to a higher standard. Both are about the respect people owe their neighbors to maintain the integrity of family. The Ninth Commandment is more about attitude and desires than actions. It serves to encourage parents to instruct their children that keeping our hands off our neighbor's spouse is so important that we shouldn't even wish to put our hands on them.

10) The Tenth Commandment (Deut. 5:21b) increases the standard given in the Seventh Commandment. Both are about the respect people owe their neighbors to maintain the integrity of personal property. The Tenth Commandment is also more about attitude and desires than actions. Parents can teach their kids that it is good that we do not steal our neighbor's property, but that is not enough. We must not desire their property in the first place."

(Adapted from the book What We Can't Not Know J. Budziszewski. Click here to find out how you can benefit from this helpful book.)