

Moses Receives the Commandments

(Exodus 19)

Introduction

Why do we have rules? Can you imagine driving around town if there were no rules? All the cars would crash into each other and people wouldn't be able to get across the street! It would be so confusing!

Can you imagine playing a game without rules? What would it be like to play football without rules? How would you know how to play? How would you know who was the winner?

Have you heard of the Ten Commandments? God gave us ten rules to live by so that we would have peaceful and joy-filled lives. Can you list the Ten Commandments? [Teacher, let them try to list them all, but don't help them out!]

Did you know that breaking even one of these ten rules only once in someone's whole life would keep them from going to heaven? God said in Deuteronomy 27:26, "*Cursed is anyone who does not obey these laws.*" Only by keeping *all* of the Ten Commandments every minute of every day of your life will you be perfect enough to be suitable to enter heaven. If it is *this* important to God that you keep the Ten Commandments shouldn't you know what they are?

Well, today we start a series of lessons which will teach us that God gave us these rules because He loves us and wants us to live a peaceful and joy-filled life.

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord, You are our Father and maker. You created us, so You know how we need to act. Thank You for giving us loving laws to keep us safe. Giving us rules proves You love us. Help us to learn what Your rules are, why You gave them to us and how we can make them work in our lives. We love You. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Obey every word of these instructions...they are not empty words—they are your life! (Deuteronomy 32:46b-47a)

Lesson

Thousands of years ago, God chose the Israelites to be His special people. They had been slaves in Egypt and cried out to God for help. He heard their cries and sent Moses to rescue them.

After escaping through the Red Sea, the children of Israel kept traveling through the wilderness over the desert sand, heading to a new country, the land that God promised to Abraham.

Exodus 19:1

Exactly two months after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived in the wilderness of Sinai.

About two months after they left Egypt, they reached Mt. Sinai. And it was here that God gave them detailed instructions about how to live and how to worship Him.

God told Moses why He picked the children of Israel to be "His Chosen People."

Exodus 19:5-6a

Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. (6) And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.

God chose the Israelites to be his special people—a special family set apart for Himself, safe and happy. He wanted them to be spiritual leaders showing everyone else in all of humanity how to live according to God's way—how to properly serve and worship Him, the only true and living God of the universe. He wanted them to show everyone the Way to everlasting life with Him.

God chose this one nation to be a channel of his blessings to the whole world. And, God wants you to be an example to the rest of the world, too. He wants you and me to show people what He is like by the way we live and act and think.

Before leading the people into the Promised Land, God had to teach them what it meant to be His special people. They had to learn how God wanted them to live. So, He led them out into the desert and while they were camped next to Mount Sinai, the Lord called to Moses from the mountain.

Exodus 19:10-11

Then the Lord told Moses, "go down and prepare the people for my arrival. Consecrate them today and tomorrow, and have them wash their clothing. (11) Be sure they are ready on the third day, for on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai as all the people watch."

Whenever you read about the third day in the scriptures like this, it's important. What did Jesus do on the third day that was out of the ordinary? He rose from the dead!

This time God was about to give His people the Ten Commandments. And, to get the people ready, Moses had them wash their clothes. The people had to prepare themselves for God's appearance. Washing their clothes would remind them how pure and clean they needed to be in the presence of God. They were to set themselves apart from their daily routine in order to dedicate themselves to God.

Just like the children of Israel needed to get their minds and hearts ready to meet with God, when we meet God for worship, we need to get our minds and hearts ready. When you get ready to come to church, don't you put on your good clothes? When we get ready to come to church we should also make sure that our hearts and minds are clean, too. We should always be our best for God and

God then told Moses that anyone who touched the holy mountain would die, so Moses built a fence around the mountain. The fence would keep the people safe, just as God's loving laws would keep them safe.

[Teacher, as you read the following passage let the children get involved in the story by making sound effects. Have someone be the

lightening, another the thunder, and yet another the horn. Then have the children shake at the appropriate time. Dramatize the passage.]

Exodus 19:16-20 [Teacher, read...]

*On the morning of the third day, **thunder** roared and **lightning** flashed, and a dense cloud came down on the mountain. There was a long loud blast from a ram's **horn**, and all the people trembled. (17) Moses led them out from the camp to meet with God and they stood at the foot of the mountain. (18) All of Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke billowed into the sky like smoke from a brick kiln, and the whole mountain **shook violently**. (19) As the blast of the ram's **horn** grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God **thundered** his reply. (20) The Lord came down on the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses climbed the mountain.*

This was the scene when God gave the people the Ten Commandments. God wanted the people to know that He was serious. He wanted to show the people just how awesome and important the Ten Commandments are. These were not just to be ten good ideas; they are ten holy commandments from the God who made us and knows what is best for us.

The Lord called to Moses. Moses went up to the top of the mountain, and God gave him these ten rules:

1. Do not have any gods but Me
2. Do not worship idols
3. Keep God's name holy
4. Set aside a special day for God
5. Honor your father and mother
6. Do not murder
7. Be true to your husband or wife

8. Do not steal
9. Do not lie
10. Do not want what others have

Why did God give the Israelites the Ten Commandments? God gave the Israelites the Ten Commands to keep them safe and to create a special people for Himself—a family who would love, honor, obey, and respect Him so they could show the rest of the world how to live God’s way.

Please Fence Me In

We’re going to talk about how these Ten Commandments are like a fence around us to keep us safe. When we keep God’s rules we stay inside the sheepfold, nice and safe and sound.

[Teacher, have each child make a section of fence by gluing two tongue depressors between two Popsicle sticks. Have them write a commandment on each of the horizontal sections. Make a corral by letting the kids stick the fence posts into clay or play dough so they stand upright. Once you have a completed corral, scatter cotton balls on the table outside the fence.]

Let’s pretend that these cotton balls lying outside the fence represent the Israelites. If we stay inside the fence, we won’t get hurt or lost or kidnapped away. No wild animals will come in to get us and we’ll live in peace and harmony inside the fence.

Let’s put the sheep inside the sheepfold.

- What keeps the flock protected? (The fence.)
- How are God’s commandments like the fence? (God’s rules protect the people.)

If everyone everywhere always obeyed these rules, they would have peaceful and joy-filled lives. There would be no anger, or sadness, or

jealousy or anything evil. People would be doing God’s will here on Earth as it is in Heaven, just like the angels do. It would be like Heaven on Earth!

Unfortunately, the Israelites didn’t always keep all of God’s commandments [have some of the “sheep” jump the fence].

- How many of you have obeyed all of God’s commandments?
- Have you always obeyed your parents?

God knows that we are just like sheep—we are naughty and can’t keep all of His commandments all the time. The Bible says, “*No one is righteous [blameless]—not even one.*” (Romans 3:10)

- Why did God give us laws He knew we couldn’t keep?

God gave us rules we couldn’t keep to show us what sin is. Because we can’t keep the Ten Commandments, it proves to us that we are sinners! We aren’t perfect! You can try all you want, but you just can’t be good enough on your own. He wanted to humble us and make us appreciate what Jesus came and did for us. Our only hope is to run to Him for forgiveness and mercy and rely on what He did for us on the cross.

If someone breaks one of God’s rules [jumps the fence], he deserves to be punished. And, he can never deserve to go to heaven and live with God. God’s Word says, “*For the wages of [punishment for] sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Romans 6:23)

That’s why God sent Jesus. He is our Good Shepherd; He loves us and came to Earth to take the punishment you and I deserve for breaking His rules.

So, what do we do when we “jump the fence” and break one of God’s rules? How do we get back inside the sheepfold? We must confess our sins to Him and stop sinning. 1 John 1:9 tells us, “*If we confess*

our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."

Does keeping the Ten Commandments get us to heaven? No! Following God's rules keeps us safe and happy and also shows God how much we love Him when we try to obey Him. But it's important to understand that following God's laws does *not* make us part of God's flock.

What makes us part of His flock is believing in what Jesus did for us on the cross. If you believe that what Jesus did on the cross paid for your sins, you *are* part of His family. You're His child and you can call Him, "Father."

God gave the Israelites these loving laws to teach them how to live a peaceful and joy-filled life. God chose the Israelites to be His special people because He expected them to teach everyone else in the world how to live a godly life.

Did the children of Israel obey the Ten Commandments? (No!) Have you always obeyed them? (No!) No one can do that!

When we study the Ten Commandments, we see how perfect God is and how sinful we are. Only one person has ever lived in this world and always kept the Ten Commandments. That was Jesus.

God wants us to come to Him and say, "*Lord, I know Your rules are perfect. I want to keep them, but I know that I can't do it on my own. I need the power of Your Holy Spirit to help me. Thank You for dying on the cross and taking the punishment that I deserve. Forgive me of my sins.*" If you pray to Him like this, He will make you part of His flock and He will be your Good Shepherd. The Holy Spirit will come to live inside you and give you the power you need to obey His rules. And, He will take care of you and protect you and then you will be able to live with Him forever in heaven when you die.

Closing Prayer

[Teacher, before you begin the closing prayer, use the chairs to form a "fence." Gather the children inside the "corral" to pray.]

Dear Lord, thank You for choosing us as your special people and giving us Your loving laws that keep us safe. Help us to keep Your commandments. But, when we do "jump the fence" please forgive us and lead us back into the sheepfold. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game or discussion of your choice:

Review questions:

1. Why did God choose the children of Israel to be "*His Chosen People*?" (To be an example to the rest of mankind, spiritual leaders, to show everyone else God's way.)
2. Why did God tell Moses to have the people wash their clothes before He would speak to them? (He wanted the people to prepare themselves, set themselves apart.)
3. Why did Moses build a fence around the bottom of Mt. Sinai? (To keep the people safe.)
4. Why did God speak to the people with a majestic display of power? (He wanted to show the people just how awesome and important the Ten Commandments are.)
5. Why did God give us laws? (God gave us loving laws to keep us safe.)

6. What sorts of things do God's laws protect us from? (If everyone everywhere always followed God's rules, no one would ever get hurt or lost or kidnapped away.)
7. What would it be like if everyone everywhere lived according to His laws? (It would be just like heaven on Earth. There would be no anger or jealousy or bitterness or lying or cheating or anything evil.)
8. Why can't we get to Heaven by keeping His laws? (You are not perfect; you could never get to God if your life depended on it. You could never be good enough. You have to accept Jesus' death on the cross to pay for your sins; there's no other way to heaven.)
9. What is the punishment due a person for not keeping one of the Ten Commandments? (Death! God's Word says, "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Romans 6:23)
10. Why do we say the Ten Commandments are like a fence? (They keep us safe.)
11. When we are naughty and "jump the fence" how do we get back in the sheepfold? (We must confess our sins.)
12. How do we become part of God's flock? (By coming to Him and saying, "*Thank You for dying on the cross and taking the punishment that I deserve.*")

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