

The Ten Commandments (Part 1)

(Exodus 19 - 20)

Introduction

Ask: Have you heard of the Ten Commandments? Do you know what they are for? (To get you to heaven.) Can you tell me each of the Ten Commandments? The Lord gave us these rules to live by. Did you know that breaking even one of these ten rules only once in your whole life will keep you from entering heaven? Only by keeping all of the Ten Commandments every minute of every day all of your life will you be perfect enough to enter heaven. God said, "*Cursed is anyone who does not...obey...these instructions.*" (Deuteronomy 27:26 NLT) If it is this important to God that you keep the Ten Commandments shouldn't you know what they are?

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to be pleasing to You. Since we call ourselves Christians, we want every one of our thoughts, words, and actions to bring Your name blessing and honor. Teach us this morning how we are to live. Help us to listen and understand with our hearts this morning. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Love means doing what God has commanded us, and he has commanded us to love one another... (2 John 6 NLT)

Lesson

After escaping through the Red Sea, the children of Israel kept walking and walking over the desert sand, traveling through the wilderness, heading to 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. They camped there for about one year. And it was here that God gave them detailed instructions about how to live and how to worship Him.

God told Moses why He considered the children of Israel, "His Chosen People."

Exodus 19:5-6

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. ⁶And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' This is the message you must give to the people of Israel."

God's reason for rescuing the Israelites from slavery was that He wanted Israel to become a model for everyone else in the world to follow. He said I want you to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." God wanted the children of Israel to be spiritual leaders showing everyone else in all of humanity how to live according to God's way and how to properly serve and worship Him, the only true and living God of the universe. He wanted Israel to represent God's way of life, to teach his Word, and to show everyone else the Way to everlasting life with Him.

This was God's plan all along. That's why He promised Abraham that He would make his descendants into a great nation. He chose this one nation and put it through a training program, so that one day it could be a channel for His blessings to the whole world.

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. ¹¹Be 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.

The people had to prepare themselves for God's appearance. They needed to wash their clothes to be ready to meet God. This 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. We should set aside the cares of everyday life.

Exodus 19:16-20

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. ¹⁷Moses led them out from the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸All 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. ¹⁹As the blast of the ram's horn grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God thundered his reply. ²⁰The LORD came down on the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses climbed the mountain.

Sometimes God speaks to his people with a majestic display of power; at other times he speaks quietly in a still small voice. Here at Mount Sinai, the awesome display of light and sound was necessary to show Israel God's great power and authority. God wanted to show the people just how important the Ten Commandments are to Him. Only then would they listen to Moses and Aaron. The people were trembling with fear when God spoke.

We call the Ten Commandments, "The Law" because these are the rules we are to live by to please God. The first four teach us how to love God. The last six teach us how to love other people. Today we'll look at the first four laws and next time, we'll look at the last six.

The order that God gives us the commandments is important. We need to put God first. By honoring and loving God, you learn to honor and love others.

Commandment #1 — Do not have any other God

Exodus 20:2-3

"I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. ²⁰"You must not have any other god but me.

This is the first commandment because if you obey it by truly loving God and putting Him first in your life, you will find yourself obeying the other nine commandments.

The Israelites had just come from Egypt, a land of many idols and many gods. Because each god represented a different aspect of life, it was common to worship many gods in order to get the maximum number of blessings. When God told His people to worship and believe in Him, that wasn't so hard for them — He was just one more god to add to the list. But when He said, "You shall have no other gods before me," that was difficult for the people to accept. But if they didn't learn that the God who led them out of Egypt was the only true God, they could not be his people — no matter how faithfully they kept the other nine commandments.

Jesus said, "*You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.*" (Matthew 4:10 NLT)

The one true God, Creator of heaven and earth, deserves your love, worship, and obedience far above anything or anyone else.

Because people do not always keep the first commandment, God gave the second...

Commandment #2 — Do not worship idols

Exodus 20:4

"You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea.

A carved image is an idol made from wood or stone or metal. It may be a huge statue or even a tiny good luck charm. It may look like something God has made — an animal, bird, fish or human form. God cannot be reduced to an idol. And people who make idols come to believe that the idol itself is a god. They trust the idol rather than look to God.

Psalms 115:3-8,

Our God is in the heavens, and he does as he wishes. ⁴Their idols are merely things of silver and gold, shaped by human hands. ⁵They have mouths but cannot speak, and eyes but cannot see. ⁶They have ears but cannot hear, and noses but cannot smell. ⁷They have hands but cannot feel, and feet but cannot walk, and throats but cannot make a sound. ⁸And those who make idols are just like them, as are all who trust in them.

Today we can allow many things to become gods to us. Money, school, play, sports heroes, singers, TV and movie stars, friends — none of these should be as important to you as God. No one sets out with the intention of worshiping these other things. But by the amount of time we devote to them, they can start to control our thoughts and energies and become substitutes for God. We must be sure to let God hold the central place in our lives to keep these things from turning into gods.

Commandment #3 — Do not misuse God's name

Exodus 20:7

"You must not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name."

Ask: How do you think people can misuse God's name? When something unexpected happens, have you ever heard someone say, "Oh my God!"? That is misusing God's name in a disrespectful way.

When you or I use the name of God or His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in a thoughtless way or as a swear word, we dishonor God. God's

name is special because it carries his personal identity. Using it carelessly or in a curse is so common today that we may fail to realize how serious it is. The way we use God's name shows how we really feel about him. We should respect his name and use it appropriately. Only speak God's name in praise or worship, not as curse or in a joking manner.

Only use God's name in ways that show your love and respect for Him. Ask God to help you honor His name and to protect it, too.

Commandment #4 — Set aside a special day for God

Exodus 20:8-11

"Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹You have six days each week for your ordinary work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy."

The word Sabbath comes from a Hebrew word meaning to "to rest from work." Holy means "to set apart." God was telling the people to set aside a special day each week for rest and worship. Israel observed the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week, our Saturday. Because Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, His followers began to set aside Sunday as their special day of worship.

As a day of rest, the Sabbath was God's gift to His people. God knew that doing ordinary work seven days a week would be too tiring for us. When we use one day in seven as a day of rest and worship, we demonstrate how important God is to us and it gives us the extra benefit of refreshing our spirits.

Jesus said, *"The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people..."* (Mark 2:27.)

Conclusion

Ask: What is the punishment due a person for not keeping one of the Ten Commandments?

God's Word says, "*For the wages of sin is death...*" (Romans 6:23a NLT.) The death this is taking about is eternal separation from God.

Ask: Did the children of Israel obey these Commandments? (No!) Have you always obeyed the Ten Commandments? (No!)

God knew no one could keep the Law perfectly.

Ask: Why would God give us commandments and, knowing we couldn't keep them, tell us if we break even one of them, we are doomed to eternal spiritual death?

When we study the Ten Commandments, we see how perfect God is and how sinful we are. God gave us these commandments to show us that we can't be perfectly righteous if left to our own strength. We can't be good enough on our own. We must go to God for forgiveness and mercy.

Only one human being who lived in this world always kept the Ten Commandments. That was God's perfect Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the Lord Jesus never sinned, He was the only one qualified to take our punishment for us. When Jesus came back to life after He was crucified, it proved that He is God.

If you will admit your sin and trust the Lord Jesus to forgive you, He will give you His power, the power of the Holy Spirit, which will enable you to live your life in a way that pleases Him.

God wants us to be in a place of humility before Him. He wants us to come to Him and say, "*I know what Your perfect standard is, Lord. And, I know that I can never meet Your demands. Thank You for sending Jesus who took the punishment that I deserve. I surrender to You and ask You to forgive me. Thank You for providing a way to live with You forever in heaven when I die.*"

So far, we have looked at the first four commandments, the ones that tell us ways to love God. The next six commandments tell us ways to love each other. We will look at them next week.

Closing Prayer

[Teacher, have each child pray a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord.]

Learning Activities**Game Center**

Use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

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 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.)
4. What is the first commandment? (You shall have no other gods before me.)
5. What are some things that take the place of God in our lives? (Money, school, sports, TV, movie stars, friends)
6. What is the second commandment? (You shall not make for yourself a carved image.)
7. What does it mean to take the name of the Lord your God in vain? (To use it in an empty or thoughtless way or as a swear word.)

8. What does the word "Sabbath" mean? (To stop or to rest from work.)
9. How do we keep the Sabbath holy? (By setting aside a special day each week for rest and worship.)
10. What do the first four commandments have to do with? (How to worship and respect God.)
11. Why did God give us the Ten Commandments if He knew we couldn't keep them? (He wanted us to realize our own inability to be righteous. To humble us and to be thankful that He sent Jesus.)
12. What is the punishment due a person for not keeping one of the commandments? (Death!)
13. What is the only thing that will cause us to stop trying to be good enough on our own and to run to God for forgiveness and mercy? (We must realize our own inability to be righteous.)
14. What is today's Memory Verse? (*Love means doing what God has commanded us, and he has commanded us to love one another... 2 John 6.*)

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