

The Ten Commandments

God's law reveals our individual inability to live a holy life apart from Jesus.



GOD'S STORY
THE TRANSFORMATION FOR ADULT LIFEGROUPS

Exodus 20:1-17

April 5, 2020

(Exodus 20:1-17) ¹And God spoke all these words: ²"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³"You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. ⁷"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. ⁸"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. ¹²"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. ¹³"You shall not murder. ¹⁴"You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵"You shall not steal. ¹⁶"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. ¹⁷"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

COMMUNITY – CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER

- **What rule did you have the most trouble following as a child? Why was it so difficult for you?**
- **How different would your home be without any rules? How would it be the same? How about your workplace? Community?**

Rules protect us, keep us safe, and hold us accountable to certain standards or criteria. Just like rules in our homes, workplaces, and community, God has given us foundational principles for living in His family.

CONTENT – EXPLORING GOD'S STORY

Have a volunteer read Exodus 20:1-3

- **Why did the Israelites need these specific instructions from God?**
- **Why did He need to remind them of who He is and what He had done for them first?**

In Exodus 4:22-23, God calls Israel his 'son.' The rest of Exodus shows how God saves his son out of slavery and welcomes him home. Notice the order of things. God did not lay down the law in Egypt saying, "You're slaves but if you learn to obey my laws I'll make you my son." No, they *are* God's son and he saves them before and apart from any obedience they might have offered. They are saved by the sheer mercy of God.

- **Given God's description of Himself, what would be the appropriate way to view His law?**

God did not give the Ten Commandments to limit or frustrate His people but to save them from the perils of a life lived outside of His guidelines. The Ten Commandments are not a narrow set of inflexible rules. They are principles that help us live fulfilling and meaningful lives. The first principle for relating to God is that we should have no other gods before Him. Ancient peoples generally worshiped more than one god. The Israelites needed to learn the basic lesson of rejecting false gods and worshiping only the one, true God. This would be a continual struggle for Israel as they move into the Promised Land and encounter the Canaanite gods.

Have a volunteer read Exodus 20:4-6

- **We may not struggle serving multiple gods, but what are some modern-day idols people worship? How do these idols impact our relationship with God?**
- **In what sense do you think God is "jealous"? How is that different from the way a human might be jealous?**

A basic thrust of this Second Commandment is that we should allow no substitutes for God in our lives; nothing should take the Lord's place. Idol worship is forbidden in this passage because the Lord is a jealous God. The Hebrew word translated "jealous" also could be translated "zealous." The word in this context does not denote a negative quality such as pettiness. Rather the word conveys the fact that God expects complete loyalty from His people. A close relationship exists between loving God and keeping His Commandments (v. 6). If we genuinely love Him, we will obey Him. Real love expresses itself in obedience and action.

Have a volunteer read Exodus 20:7-11

- **What are some ways we misuse God's name or take it lightly? In what ways may doing so harm our witness to those who don't know Him?**

God's name is too precious to be used so lightly. While this Commandment prohibits profanity and cursing, its meaning goes much deeper. This Commandment concerns fruitfulness. God's presence in our lives should produce visible fruits or results. If we profess to know Him but our lives fail to demonstrate a relationship with Him, we are lifting up the Lord's name to emptiness.

- **How are Sundays different now than 50 years ago? What have we gained during that time? What have we lost?**

Have a volunteer read Exodus 20:12-17

Essentially the first four commandments are about love for God and the last six are about love for others. Therefore, a right relationship with God is meant to flow out into a right relationship with the world. In Exodus 20:12-17, God outlined principles for relating to others. Our relationship with God is closely tied to our relationships with others. The Fifth Commandment has been called the bridge Commandment. It forms a bridge between relating to God and relating to others. A person learns respect for God by first learning respect for authority in the home.

- **How can learning these principles first through the home better equip us as Christians? How does this command relate to respecting God?**
- **How can we teach our children to honor this commandment? How can we as adults still honor our parents?**
- **If God had never given these principles for relating to others, what do you think our society would be like today?**
- **How can our thoughts and attitudes regarding these Commandments be just as harmful as acting upon them?**

The Tenth Commandment has been called the blanket Commandment. In one sense it encompasses the other Commandments because it moves beyond prohibiting wrong actions to dealing with the wrong attitudes lying behind those wrong actions. Coveting is the foundation for other sin. If we do not covet, we will less likely violate other Commandments such as those forbidding theft, adultery, and murder.

- **What do the Ten Commandments reveal concerning our need for God?**

God's calling Israel to right relationships with Him and with others through the Ten Commandments challenges us to express our obedience, allegiance, and full dependence upon God. The law of God is good, but we are not. The law reveals our need for a Mediator to bridge the gap between God's goodness and our badness. Christ alone is able to bridge this gap, and He did just that on the cross (Rom. 10:4). As our Savior, Jesus was able to do what we cannot – fulfill all of the Ten Commandments perfectly. The Law and God's commandments teach us what sin is so we may recognize and avoid it, but we could never be saved through it. See how Paul talks about this in Romans 3:20-26 and chapter 7.

COMMISSION – ENGAGING IN GOD'S STORY

- **Why are our attitudes just as important as our actions? What do our attitudes reveal about our relationship to God? To others?**
- **How can our attitudes negatively impact our actions? Positively?**

Foundational principles for right living come from God. Because He created us, He knows the guidelines we need in order to enjoy rich and fulfilling lives. We must know and understand how to honor and worship God so that we may better relate to Him and to other people. Though we may not struggle with acting against these commandments, Christ called us all to keep our attitudes and thoughts in check. Right actions begin with right attitudes.

- **How does the way we as Christians live have a bearing on whether our community lives according to God's principles?**

PRAYER: Thank God in prayer that He has given us His guidelines for living because He loves us and desires His best for us. Thank Him for sacrificing His Son on the cross for us and ask Him for help to live in obedience, both in attitudes and actions, to His guiding principles.

CONTINUE TO JOURNEY THROUGH GOD'S STORY

Bible Reading Plan:

DAY 1 – Exodus 32-33
 DAY 2 – Exodus 34-36:1
 DAY 3 – Exodus 40
 DAY 4 – Leviticus 8-9
 DAY 5 – Leviticus 16-17

KEY VERSE: Exodus 34:6-7

H.E.A.R. Method:

Highlight a verse or two.
 Explain what the text means.
 Apply the verse to your life.
 Respond to God.

Our team has put together Bible study resources to encourage and inspire you as you engage in God's Story. Visit chetscreek.com/gods-story for videos, study guides, and more.

OUR VISION

To be a church
 for the unchurched,
 here and around the world.

ADULT LIFEGROUPS

Gospel-centered communities that aim to KNOW
 GOD together and BE CHANGED by Him in a
 way that will CHANGE THE WORLD.

20:1-2. The covenant at Sinai was made at God's initiative. Before God gave His principles for right living to the Israelites, He reminded them of His identity and of what He had done for them. He identified Himself as the LORD, the personal name whose significance He had revealed more fully to Moses at the burning bush. The LORD had delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Israel's freedom from slavery rested in the Lord's love and power. What He had done for His people gave Him a claim on their lives. He had set them free. He had a right to take the initiative to tell them how to enjoy the freedom He had provided.

20:3. The first principle for relating to God is that we should have no other gods before Him. Ancient peoples generally worshiped more than one god. A variety of gods were worshiped in both Egypt and Canaan. The Israelites' sole allegiance, however, belonged to the Lord who had redeemed them. The Lord requires our sole allegiance. He, the Creator of the universe, is the only true God. The Lord not only created us; He has redeemed us by the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.

20:4-6. Idol worship is forbidden in this passage because the Lord is a jealous God. The Hebrew word translated jealous also could be translated "zealous." The word in this context does not denote a negative quality such as pettiness that we often associate with jealousy in our culture. Rather the word jealous in this context conveys the fact that God expects complete loyalty from His people. Genuine love is exclusive in a positive sense. God is zealous that we worship Him alone because He knows that such worship will result in what is best for our lives. Because of God's great love for us, He wants us to experience the best life possible.

20:7. The Third Commandment focused on our relationship with God prohibits taking God's name in vain. We are to honor His name. In Hebrew thought the name represented a person's character, nature, and identity. God's name stands for and represents Him. If we abuse His name, we show our lack of respect for Him. The first part of the Third Commandment literally can be translated: "You shall not lift up the name of the Lord your God to emptiness (vanity)." We are to demonstrate our respect and reverence for God's name by saying and doing nothing that would reflect adversely on His character.

20: 8-11. The Fourth Commandment concerning our relationship with God deals with keeping the Sabbath Day holy. Anything set apart to belong to God is holy. A holy day then is a day devoted to God's purposes. God set aside the seventh day for Himself. The Jews observe the Sabbath to commemorate God's rest on the seventh day and also God's deliverance of His people from bondage in Egypt (Deut. 5:15). We run into real problems when we attempt to define minutely how God's day is to be kept holy. God's day is kept holy when we glorify God through what we do in it.

Since Christ arose on the first day of the week, Christians observe Sunday as the Lord's Day, a day of celebration and worship. If we do not work on the Lord's Day, but do not serve God on that day either, we have failed to keep the intent of the Fourth Commandment.

The Fourth Commandment reminds believers that every day is a gift from God. All time belongs to Him. We are to be good stewards of the time He has allotted us. Observe that in addition to keeping one day holy, God also commanded His people to labor and do all their work in the remaining six days (v. 9).

20:12. The first principle regarding relating to others is to honor our fathers and mothers. The Hebrew word translated "honor" can convey the idea of giving weight or significance to someone, thus, honoring that individual. This Fifth Commandment applies to adults as well as to children. Respect for parents is a lifelong obligation. Respect includes more than obedience. It also involves living in such a way as to bring our parents honor and praise, taking time to be with them, caring for their needs, and honoring their memory.

The Fifth Commandment has been called the bridge Commandment. It forms a bridge between relating to God and relating to others. A person learns respect for God by first learning respect for authority in the home. This Commandment needs special emphasis in our society. Young children should be taught to respect their parents (see Eph. 6:1-2). Grown children should demonstrate honor toward their parents. Society as a whole needs to care for its elderly members and profit from their wisdom.

20:13. The Sixth Commandment and the second principle regarding relating to others is a command prohibiting murder. While in the Old Testament the Sixth Commandment was never understood as prohibiting capital punishment or war, the focus of this Commandment was on the sanctity of human life. God gave the gift of life, and only He has the right to take it away.

Every individual is a person of value because every person has been created in God's image (see Gen. 1:27). Societies that fall for the delusion that a person's value is based on his or her age, health, contributions, or certain other stipulations begin to violate this Commandment. People begin to destroy lives including those of the unborn, the sick, and the elderly. Sometimes lives are destroyed merely for the sake of convenience. Our world already has crossed the threshold of danger in this area. We need to pray for a return to a respect for life that recognizes all human life as a gift from God.

20:14. The Seventh Commandment and the third principle concerning relating to others is the prohibition against adultery. The focus of the Commandment falls on the right to a secure family life. The marriage covenant was to be regarded with utter seriousness. It was not to be violated. Not even King David could escape the consequences of breaking this Commandment (see 2 Sam. 12:1-15). Jesus applied the scope of this Commandment to include one's inner thoughts and attitudes (see Matt. 5:27-28).

This Commandment has been repeatedly broken in today's society. God has not changed His standards. Consequences of disobeying this Commandment include disease, unwanted pregnancies, undisciplined children, child abuse, divorce, and abortion. The entire society suffers when its members ignore this Commandment.

20:15. The Eighth Commandment and the fourth principle regarding relationships with others is the prohibition against stealing. Underlying this Commandment is the right to property. Stealing also reveals disrespect for others. If we do not honor another person's property, we do not respect that person. Stealing stems from selfishness and destroys trust. A society in which fear of theft predominates is an unstable society.

20:16. The Ninth Commandment and the fifth principle regarding relating to others is the prohibition against bearing false witness. Possibly this Commandment originally was interpreted in a limited sense to refer to giving false testimony in a law court. The scope of the Commandment, however, obviously is much larger. This Commandment encompasses the speech of daily life. Lies are wrong, whether spoken to cause deliberate harm or to protect ourselves from embarrassment. Speaking the truth should characterize God's people.

20:17. The Tenth Commandment and the sixth principle regarding our relationships with others is the prohibition against coveting. To covet means to jealously or selfishly desire something that belongs to someone else. That selfish desire might be directed, for example, toward another person's property, home, wealth, health, spouse, children, success, or reputation. Avoiding a covetous attitude lies at the root of keeping all the other Commandments. Demonstrating a covetous attitude reflects ingratitude for God's loving provision for His people.