

Exod. 20:1–17

Ps. 19

1 Cor. 1:18–25

John 2:13–22

The Ten Commandments

Goal for the Session *Children will learn about the Ten Commandments.*

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Exodus 20:1–17

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” W. Sibley Towner

The setting in Exodus places the Decalogue (meaning the “Ten Words”) at the beginning of the lengthy covenant passage known as the Sinai pericope (Exodus 20:1–Numbers 10:10). Its position in the text bespeaks its primary importance. This is categorical law, setting forward the principles essential for the viability of a community. It comes to us almost as a kind of legal credo, fundamental to what individual Israelites understood was expected of them as people of God. The Decalogue begins with four commandments aimed at establishing a right relationship between God and the elect people. The remaining verses regulate relationships between persons.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” George W. Stroup

One of the central convictions of Jewish and Christian faith is that human life is to be lived before God and that such life has an order and structure, constituted by God’s commandments. It is important to remember that the Ten Commandments presuppose Israel’s history and its understanding of covenantal life before God. They guide us as we journey in our life before God and our life with our neighbors. They do not show us what we must do or how we must live in order to receive God’s covenantal grace. They light our way and show us how we should live as people who have already been freely given God’s grace in Jesus Christ.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Craig Kocher

The Commandments come as a gift from God to the people of Israel to structure their common life, and to shape individual lives that are worthy of the God who has rescued them and with whom they are in covenant. To be bound in covenant with God is to be set free to live as God’s people. There is an internal logic to the Commandments that is both compelling and beautiful: The way we attend to God shapes the way we attend to our neighbor. In other words, faithful worship of God leads to proper love of neighbor.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Barbara Brown Taylor

These practices are not kindly suggestions. They express the purposeful will of God for God’s people. Those who ignore the divine teachings do so at their own peril—not because God is standing over them with a hammer, but because the teachings describe the way of life. To ignore them is to wander into the ways of death instead. The Ten Teachings also constitute a kind of trust exercise about the nature of reality; they challenge all other readings of reality. *Trust me, God says. Those other teachings are not good for you. The life you think they bring you is not real life.*

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:1–17

Focus on Your Teaching

Children this age are interested in rules. They like to know exactly what is expected at home, church, and school. They appreciate that rules are important to keep them safe and make things fair, and can understand rules in a positive light when they are presented that way. They understand that adults who care about them establish rules, and this will help them to begin to understand God’s relationship with the Israelites and the love behind the Ten Commandments.

God of all, thank you for telling me your story through the Bible and showing me how to live as your child. Enlighten my understanding, so that I can help the children in my care grow to treasure your ways. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- purple cloth
- battery-powered candle
- plastic Easter eggs, Easter basket
- purple decorator stones
- permanent marker
- Singing the Feast, 2023–2024*; CD player
- blue bedsheet or tarp
- Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 31
- Bible
- Resource Sheet 1

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 1 on card stock, paper clips, crayons
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2, crayons, glitter glue pens
- option 3: bean bag

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, place purple decorator stones (from a craft store or florist) in the Easter basket, topped by the plastic Easter eggs with the children’s names on them from the previous session. If you did not do so for the February 18 session, use a permanent marker to print each child’s name on a plastic Easter egg that opens. Have extra Easter eggs on hand for visitors. Place the basket, candle, and Color Pack 1 on a purple cloth in the center of your meeting space. If you will be using option 1 in Responding, make two copies of Resource Sheet 1 (The Ten Commandments) on card stock for each child and cut them apart as directed.

Welcome children as they arrive. Gather around the candle. Point to Color Pack 1, and recall that the church is in the season called Lent and the color of Lent is purple. Lent is the time for Christians to prepare for Easter. Play “You Are My Beloved Child” (Color Pack 31; track 26 on *Singing the Feast, 2023–2024*), encouraging children to hum or sing along while taking their eggs from the basket. Invite children to take a purple decorator stone and add it to their egg, saying aloud or thinking quietly of something they want to ask God or something they wonder about. When everyone has had a turn, return the eggs to the Easter basket to use next week. Light the candle and pray aloud, asking learners to echo each phrase:

Dearest God, / bless our Lenten journey. / Bless our learning, / our words, / and our work today. / Amen.

Ask the children to name some of the rules they have at home or school, and then discuss:

- ✪ Who makes these rules?
- ✪ Which rule do you think is most important? Why?
- ✪ What do you think would happen if there were no rules?

**You Are My
Beloved Child**

You are my beloved child,
hallelujah, *(repeat)*

And my face has smiled on
you, hallelujah, *(repeat)*

Then says God to everyone,
hallelujah, *(repeat)*

You're God's daughter,
you're God's son,
hallelujah! *(repeat)*

EXPLORING

Set the scene for learning the Ten Commandments by reading aloud the following summary of how the Israelites escaped from slavery in Egypt:

The Israelites were God's people. While they were living in Egypt, the Egyptian king made them his slaves. They worked very hard making bricks for all the new buildings the king wanted to build. They were tired and sore, and they prayed to God to set them free. God sent a man named Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When they were leaving, the Egyptian soldiers chased after them. God helped Moses part the water in the Red Sea so that the Israelites could escape right through it. *(Show Color Pack 2.)* Imagine how the Israelites felt when they were chased by Egyptian soldiers. Imagine how they felt when the water of the sea opened up so that they could walk across. *(Lay out a blue sheet or tarp across the middle of the room. Tell your group it is the Red Sea, and you are the Egyptian army. Get up and chase the children from one side of the room to the other, and then sit back down.)*

Discuss:

✠ Why do you think God helped the Israelites escape from Egypt?

Say: "After God helped the Israelites escape out of Egypt, God led them through a wilderness area to the land of promise. God gave Moses a set of rules for the people to follow. *(Show Color Pack 3.)* These rules are called the Ten Commandments. These commandments told the Israelites how to live with love for God and love for one another. God gave these commandments to help the Israelites live in peace and safety. These rules helped the people of Israel understand how to live as God's people."

Open your Bible to Exodus 20:1–17, saying that God's Ten Commandments are found here. God's people today still live by these rules. Read the child-friendly version of the Ten Commandments from Resource Sheet 1 (The Ten Commandments). Take time to clarify the meaning of any difficult words. Ask:

✠ Which of these commandments have you heard before?

✠ Why do you think God gives us these commandments in the Bible?

✠ What happens when people do not follow the Ten Commandments? *(Reassure children that when they break a commandment, either intentionally or unintentionally, they can ask God for forgiveness and God will give them a fresh start.)*

✠ What do you learn about God in the story of God giving Moses the Ten Commandments?

**EASY
PREP**

Coloring the pairs of cards on the copies of Resource Sheet 1 will help less confident readers remember which cards are matches as they play the game.

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use.

- 1. Ten Commandments Match** Help the children learn the Ten Commandments by playing a matching game. Give each child two sets of commandment cards made from Resource Sheet 1. Have them make matching pairs, then use crayons to color the side with the words in each pair with the same color or design. Form pairs to play. Have each pair lay one person's cards in a neat grid, facedown. Explain that they will take turns turning over any two cards and picking them up if they match. Play until all the matches are found. Encourage children to help each other read the commandments on the cards as they play. Secure each child's cards with a paper clip to take home.
- 2. Sabbath Calendar** Explore the meaning of God's commandment to keep the Sabbath holy. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Keep the Sabbath Holy). Read aloud the title in unison, and invite comments about how this calendar looks different from some others. Explain that, for Christians, the Sabbath is Sunday. Read Exodus 20:9–11, noting the reason God gives for this commandment. Tell how it is important for God's people to make a special time for prayer, praising God, studying the Bible, and resting each week. Invite learners to tell what makes Sundays special for them. Invite them to write or draw about the things they do each day on the calendar, using glitter glue to make a border around Sunday to show it is special. Encourage them to use the calendars with their families.
- 3. Bean Bag Toss** This game will help children learn the commandments. Stand in a circle. Begin by tossing a bean bag and saying one of the Ten Commandments. The child who catches the bean bag calls out another commandment and tosses the bean bag to another child. Continue until everyone has had a turn. Option: Make it more challenging by trying to say the commandments in order as you go. Encourage children to ask each other for help if they need it.

CLOSING

Gather in a circle and use the list of the Ten Commandments from Resource Sheet 1 to create a closing litany prayer. Read aloud each commandment, asking learners to respond, "The Lord is our one and only God," after you read each one.

Send a blessing around the circle. Pass a purple decorator stone to the child on your right as you say: "May God bless you and help you to follow the Ten Commandments, (*Name*)."
That child then speaks the blessing to the child on his or her right, and so on around the circle. When the stone returns to you, lead the group in saying: "Amen. Amen. Amen."

Extinguish the candle.

Say a personal good-bye to each learner, letting each one know that you hope to see him or her again next week.

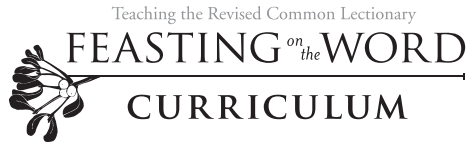


The Ten Commandments

Note to teachers: The heading in the Bible for Exodus 20:1–17 specifies “The Ten Commandments,” but not how to number them. For example, do verses 2–6 contain one or two commandments? There are slight differences in the ways that denominations list the Ten Commandments. Make two photocopies of this page on card stock for each learner. Cut apart and keep the ten cards that name the Ten Commandments as listed in your church catechism or worship book and discard the remaining cards.

The Ten Commandments	Do not worship any other gods.	Do not worship idols.	Do not misuse the Lord’s name.
Keep the Sabbath holy.	Respect your parents.	Do not kill.	Be faithful in marriage.
Do not steal.	Do not lie.	Do not long for things that belong to other people.	Do not tempt people to be unfaithful to their families.

March 3, 2024
The Ten Commandments



Grades (K)1–2
Resource Sheet 2

Keep the Sabbath Holy

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday