

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AN INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

God's Word:

Exodus 20:1-17

Key Verse:

“FOR THIS IS THE LOVE OF GOD, THAT WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS;
AND HIS COMMANDMENTS ARE NOT BURDENSOME.”

1 JOHN 5:3



Breaking it Down:

The Ten Commandments are the core of the laws of God. They provide God's standard that enables us as Christians to know when we are on course with His will, and when we have drifted from it and into sin. The Ten Commandments are of great importance for all believers since they describe God's Holy character, and His desire for us as His children.

Four of the Ten Commandments deal with our conduct towards God. The other six deal with our conduct towards other people, or, as the Bible calls them, our neighbors.

Note that these are not “Ten *Suggestions*,” but “Ten Commandments.” They lay out the foundation of how God expects His people to conduct themselves in their daily living. Though they



are commands, they aren't given to hurt us but to protect us and nurture our relationship with God and with other people.

God formally listed them – writing them with His finger into tablets of stone -- after He delivered His chosen people from Egypt. However, the concepts weren't new. In fact, the fourth



commandment – to remember the Sabbath Day – was just that, a reminder. God had established the seventh day as set apart and holy during Creation, as recorded in Genesis 2. At Genesis 2:2-3, God states that He rested on that day, sanctified it (set it apart as holy) and blessed it.

Before God formally gives the Ten Commandments, He reminds Israel that He is the One who brought them out of Egypt and out of bondage. (Exodus 20:2) He reminds the people of His identity and His authority and how He has already acted on their behalf.

The sons of Israel had been in Egypt for 450 years. They knew about the God of their father Jacob, but many did not have a relationship with Him. They had been in Egypt under the authority of ungodly people. During that time they had adopted much of the culture of the Egyptians and followed many of their gods.

Three months after God delivered the people from their Egyptian bondage, they arrived at the wilderness of Sinai and camped in front of its mountain. There, Moses—whom God had called as Israel's leader--saw the fulfillment of what God had told him. "And He said, 'Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.'" (Exodus 3:12)

God had brought Israel out from bondage with power; bore them on eagle's wings to be His possession among all people. They were to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation for Him but before that could be fulfilled, God wanted to make a covenant with Israel. That covenant involved law, sacrifice, and the choice to obey and be blessed, or to disobey and be cursed. Part of that covenant is the Ten Commandments.

God's people had been witnessing His awesome power in various miracles over the previous months – watching the opening of the Red Sea, receiving manna for their daily food, and seeing water emerge from a rock. Now they were about to see the awesome manifestation of God's presence and glory as He spoke to Moses in the company of the people.

The Ten Commandments, also known as the ten words or the Decalogue, were given by the voice of God on Mount Sinai in the hearing of all Israel (Ex. 19:16-20:17). They were written by the finger of God into stone to be an everlasting foundation for the conduct of His people.

In the New Testament, Jesus states that none of the law is done away with, but that He came to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17-18) And when challenged by one of the religious leaders, He explained that the Ten Commandments are fundamental to our relationships with God and other people.

“Which is the great commandment in the Law?” a Pharisee and lawyer asked. “And [Jesus] said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:36-40)



Living It:

Sometimes we believe life would be easier if we could just live without any regard for others, such as parents, friends and the rest of the human race. We don't want to suffer any consequences for the wrongdoing we commit. We want to just do as we please without looking back at the impact of what we have done. That would be awesome don't you think? I say, No way! Can you imagine how much more chaotic this Earth would be if all humans had no sense of right and wrong?

God's commandments are His gift to humanity, showing us what we should and should not do. They are not just written in stone tablets. Romans 2:15 tells us that God also places them in our hearts. The commandments are not a set of rules or laws that we must follow in order to be saved, for salvation is through Christ alone. But they are ours to keep, because we have a relationship with God. Christ Himself said, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” (John 14:21)



Christ said that if we love Him we will keep His commandments, because by doing so we are imitating Him. “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

(John 15:10) By obeying His commandments, we show Him that we want to remain in His love. By disregarding them, we let Him know that we don't want to remain in a good relationship with Him.

Some people say we are not obligated to keep God's commandments. Others say we are only obligated to keep some of them. You must decide but your decision will indicate your love. Will you obey God's commandments and show God that you love Him? Or will you choose to disobey God and thus choose sin and its consequences, including spiritual death? The Bible says that God does not obligate us to obey Him. He wants our love. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:21)



Understanding It:

1. What did God use to write the Ten Commandments?
2. What do you think is the significance of God writing the Ten Commandments in stone?
3. Why is it important for us to obey God's commandments?
4. Considering Jesus' attitude towards God's commandments, why should we imitate Him and keep God's commandments?



Doing It!

God's commandments set boundaries for our benefit and provide us with protection from many consequences we would suffer from practicing sin.

Many times we will feel like going beyond those boundaries, because we mistakenly believe we are missing out. But obedience to God is more important than our feelings. Feelings will change as we grow.

Today, I challenge you to commit yourself to being obedient to God's commandments, bringing glory to God and bringing blessing to your life.

