

Ten Commandments



Scripture Reference: [Exodus 19:1-20:21](#) and [Exodus 24:1-24](#)

Suggested Theme: God knows the best way to live. His commands help us live a good and wise life.

Memory Verse: Memorise the Ten Commandments. [From Exodus 20:1-17, ICB](#)

Story Overview:

The Lord knew that His people would need rules so that they could get along and they would know how to love and obey Him. When the Israelites came to Mount Sinai, Moses went up on the mountain, and the Lord laid out his covenant with his people, which included the Ten Commandments and laws for life and worship. As the people watched Moses ascend the mountain into God's presence, they heard thunder and trumpet sounds and saw lightning and smoke. The Lord wrote the commands on tablets of stone and gave them to Moses for the people.

Background Study:

God brought His people out of Egypt and He took care of them as they traveled. After about two months, the people camped beside Mount Sinai.

In a dramatic demonstration—thunder, lightning, billowing smoke, trembling mountain, and the blast of a trumpet—God spoke from Heaven and made clear His intentions for his people. Although the 10 Commandments are the most well-known part of the covenant, there were many other instructions given on the mountain.

- [Exodus 20:22-23:33](#) Laws concerning daily life, justice, property, and festivals as well as God's promise to send his angel to fight for his people and smooth the way all the way to the Promised Land.
- [Exodus 25:1-31:18](#) Laws and instructions concerning the building of the tabernacle (a dwelling place for God), furniture for worship, priests and details such as priestly clothing, recipes for oil and incense and keeping a Sabbath.

These commands were the foundation of their lives. The laws were given to protect and help them become a great nation that was unique and different from all the surrounding nations.

The idea of concrete rules and commandments can seem a sharp contrast to the societies within which some of us live. In these societies, each person is encouraged to decide for himself or herself what is right. Teach the children that God's commands protect us and help us. They are given for our good, not simply to place restrictions on us but because God wants what is best for His people. Most importantly, they are important because they are GOD's words and not man's.

As God descended upon the mountain in fire, the rumbling of thunder, the flashing of lightning, and the sound of a trumpet made everyone tremble ([Exodus 19:16-18](#)). God had a purpose, appearing with power. In [Exodus 20:20](#), we discover that God wanted the Israelites to see His power so that they would obey Him. In answer to God's call, Moses went up and down the mountain several times to receive God's instructions for his people. When Moses explained God's covenant to the people, they promised obedience. These commands reflect God's character and, therefore, remind us that following God means living up to a standard of God's character. These objective standards are something against which we can measure our behaviour and are often the instruments the Holy Spirit uses to convict us of sin.

Through the Ten Commandments, God provided guidelines for interaction with himself and with other people. God wasn't just giving Israel a set of laws. He was renewing the covenant He had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God promised to make Israel His own special people and a holy nation if they would obey Him ([Exodus 19:5-6](#)).

Commandment 1: You must not have any other gods except me.

Jehovah (better known as "Yahweh") is the only real God. His people must not invent or accept any others.

Commandment 2: You must not make for yourselves any idols.

Both in Egypt and in Canaan, people made images of people and animals and called them gods. The people of Israel were not to make any such thing to be worshipped. God is jealous in a good way, an unselfish way. He wants people to worship Him because that is good for people. It makes them do right, and doing right brings them God's mercy and blessing.

Commandment 3: You must not use the name of the Lord your God thoughtlessly.

Do not use God's name in profane cursing. Do not use His name without really meaning to speak of Him. Some people use His name as an expression of surprise, wonder, or anger. His people should never do that.

Commandment 4: Remember to keep the Sabbath as a holy day.

The people of Israel were commanded not to work on the seventh day of the week, Saturday ([Genesis 2:1-3](#)). There is no record that He told people to rest on that day until He brought His people out of Egypt to become a separate nation ([Exodus 16:22-30](#)). As He gave laws for that nation at Sinai, He commanded its people to rest on the seventh day. He made the Sabbath a sign between Himself and the people of Israel ([Exodus 31:12-17](#)) and a memorial of their deliverance from Egypt ([Deuteronomy 5:15](#)).

Commandment 5: Honour your father and your mother.

Parents were commanded to teach God's Word ([Deuteronomy 6:6-7](#)). Children who honoured their parents would then obey God, and God would let them live long and happily in the country He would give them. Ephesians 6:1-3 says that children who honour and obey their parents still can expect longer lives.

Commandment 6: You must not murder anyone.

Other parts of the law command that a murderer is to be put to death ([Numbers 35:16-18](#)). This Commandment forbids murder.

Commandment 7: You must not be guilty of adultery.

Husbands and wives should be true to each other as long as they live. A married person cannot have a girlfriend or boyfriend.

Commandment 8: You must not steal.

It is wrong to take the property of another without paying a fair price for it.

Commandment 9: You must not tell lies.

God's people were to be truthful, never lying to or about others.

Commandment 10: You must not want to take anything that belongs to someone else.

It is bad to want what belongs to someone else unless he or she wants to sell it and we are ready to pay a fair price for it.

The covenant was that God would protect and bless His people, and they would obey Him. This agreement was written in stone by God Himself.

“So the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai. Then the Lord gave him the two stone tablets with the agreement written on them. The finger of God wrote the commands on the stones.”

[Exodus 31:18, ICB](#)

It is important to note that two sets of stone tablets were actually given to Moses. Sadly, while Moses was on the mountain receiving the commandments, the people below grew tired of waiting and built an idol to worship. When Moses descended the mountain and found this happening, he threw the first stone tablets down and broke them.

1. The first set of stone tablets are the ones discussed in today's lesson, [Exodus 31:18](#)
2. The people's disobedience is covered in the lesson about [the Golden Calf](#). You can read about Moses breaking the first tablets in [Exodus 32:15-19](#).
3. The second set of tablets is described in [Exodus 34:1-28](#).

Way to Introduce the Story:

Find pictures of traffic signs. Hold these up and let the children talk about what each one means. Discuss why it is important to obey these rules. What would happen if people did not obey the rules? “Sometimes rules can help us all be safe. If people disobey some of the rules then it makes all of us unhappy. God knew that His people needed rules so that they would know how to worship Him and how to treat other people.”

The Story:

God's people had been travelling on their journey from Egypt for three months. They arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai. The Israelites spread their camp in the desert in front of the mountain. Moses went up onto the mountain to speak with the Lord.

Moses remembered this place because it was where he used to be a shepherd for his father-in-law. It was also where he had seen the burning bush. Moses remembered how God had promised to lead Israel out of Egypt. He knew that the Lord always did what He said He would do.

On the mountain, God spoke to Moses and gave him a message for the people of Israel. Moses called the people's elders and told them what the Lord had commanded him to say. This was the message: “If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations, you will be my treasured possession.”

When the people heard God's message, they responded: “We will do everything the Lord has said.”

The Lord gave special instructions to Moses for the people. They were to wash themselves and their clothing and be ready by the third day. On that day, the Lord was going to come down on Mount Sinai. The people were not to touch the mountain. Anyone who touched the mountain was to be put to death.

On the morning of the third day, the people assembled before the mountain, dressed in their newly cleaned clothes. As they gazed at the mountain, they saw God's power demonstrated once more.

A thick cloud was on the mountain. Lightning flashed, and thunder rolled down its slopes. Then fire burst out of the mountain, and there was a loud trumpet blast. The people trembled with fright when they saw

this awesome display of God's power. The trumpet sound kept getting louder and louder. Then, God spoke to Moses. He gave Moses the Ten Commandments that He wanted His people to obey.

These are the Ten Commandments from the Lord:

1. You must not have any other gods except me.
2. You must not make for yourselves any idols.
3. You must not use the name of the Lord your God thoughtlessly.
4. Remember to keep the Sabbath as a holy day.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You must not murder anyone.
7. You must not be guilty of adultery.
8. You must not steal.
9. You must not tell lies
10. You must not want to take anything that belongs to someone else.

God gave these Commandments to His people because He knew they needed a plan for living. He was preparing the Israelites to become a great nation. God knew that a nation could not be great unless there were good laws. The laws would guide them in how they were to worship God and how they were to treat other people. If the people obeyed the laws, then they would be happy, and they would show the other nations that the nation of Israel followed God.

God's rules were also a symbol of the important agreement or covenant God had with His people. They would obey Him, and He would take care of them. God wrote this agreement on stone so Moses could take it down the mountain and show the people.

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

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Review:

- What was the name of the mountain where God gave the people the Ten Commandments? (Mount Sinai)
- Who did God give the Ten Commandments to so he could tell the people? (Moses)
- What did God write the Ten Commandments on? (Tablets of stone)
- Why did God give His people commandments? (The commandments would help His people live in ways that pleased Him and would help them be a godly nation. Their lives would be better if they followed these laws)
- What special relationship did God and Israel make? (A covenant)
- What is a covenant? (A covenant was a special agreement between God and the Israelites that the Israelites would follow God and they would be His people. They agreed to love each other)
- What might have happened if the Israelites had no commandments or laws?
- Why is it important we follow God's laws?
- What did you learn about God from this story?

Reflection:

- What part of this story do you find most interesting?
- Imagine you are an Israelite in this story. What do you hear and see as God speaks to you and the other Israelites?
- How do you think God felt when the Israelites agreed to be His people and follow His ways?
- How do you think the Israelites felt when God agreed to be their God, and they got to be His people?
- Imagine you have just seen God part the waters of the sea, guide you through the desert with a pillar of fire and a pillar of cloud, provide you with manna and quail, and promise to bring you to a new land. Would you be excited that He wanted to be your God, and you got to be His people? Why?
- Is God the God you follow and love?
- Which of the ten commandments is hardest for you to obey?
- What commandment do you want to ask God to help you obey this week?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [Happy all the Time \(Inright, outright\) Song](#)
- [If You're Happy and You Know It Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

Activities:

- Write commandments on index cards (one commandment per card). Make two sets of these so that you have twenty cards in all. Turn the cards face down and mix them up. Play "concentration" where the children match pairs.
- Let children act out each commandment in a modern situation.
- Discuss the consequences of no rules (traffic, school, sports, government regulations in conservation, food preparation, etc.)
- Help the children learn the [Ten Commandments](#) from memory. [Click here for ways to do this.](#)
- Read what Jesus said in [John 15:14](#) and talk about being a friend to God.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

- Cut strips of paper and use them to depict the story as you tell it. The papers can be placed on a flat surface (like a table) and moved around to form shapes such as mountains, tents, lightning bolts, tablets, numbers 1 through 10, and finally, a happy face. [Click here for printable instructions for this craft.](#)



- Make "stone" tablets out of salt dough.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page with text \(Ministry Spark\)](#)
- [Colouring page Moses and the 10 Commandments \(Christian Answers\)](#)
- [Colouring page listing the 10 Commandments \(Teacher Help\)](#)
- [Craft: Toilet paper roll figure of Moses \(Sunday School Crafts\)](#)
- [Craft: Paper bag Ten Commandments \(Crayola\)](#)
- [Craft: Parchment commandments \(DLTK\)](#)
- [Other: Map showing Egypt and the Hebrew's journey \(Bible-Printables\)](#)
- [Other: The ten commandments for kids \(Ministry to Children\)](#)
- [Learn the 10 Commandments using hand motions \(Enchanted Schoolhouse\)](#)

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Date

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