

Exod. 20:1–17

Ps. 19

1 Cor. 1:18–25

John 2:13–22

Ten Commandments

Goal for the Session

Children will hear about the Ten Commandments and tell some ways to follow them in their relationships with God and others.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Exodus 20:1–17

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” W. Sibley Towner

The Decalogue 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 first table of the law (vv. 1–11)*. The pericope begins with four commandments aimed at establishing a right relationship between God and the elect people. Like all the commandments, these are addressed to an individual Israelite in the second person singular, though of course they are intended to regulate community life. *The second table of the law (vv. 12–20)*. The remaining verses of the Decalogue offer categorical imperatives that regulate relationships within the elect people of God.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” George W. Stroup

It is important to remember that the Ten Commandments presuppose Israel’s history and its understanding of covenantal life before God, because, especially in Christian circles, the Ten Commandments have all too often been reduced to moral principles. Although Christians differ on precisely how the Ten Commandments are numbered, all agree that the commandments are in the form of two tables, of which one has to do with how people are to live before God and the second with how they are to live with one another. That the commandments are given in two tables has great significance for Jewish and Christian life. The two tables differ, but they are also inseparable. Hence it would be a profound mistake to emphasize one and ignore the other, to reduce the commandments to either ethics or theology. Because the two tables should not be understood apart from one another, so too theology and ethics are inseparable.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Craig Kocher

As the Ten Commandments were given to the people of Israel as a gift to shape their love of God and one another, the journey of Lent comes as a gift to mold the witness of the church. It is an opportunity to confess the ways we have squandered God’s gifts, to renew the vibrancy and faithfulness of our worship, and to increase our love of neighbors near and far. Like the Commandments, Lent is not about religious moralism. Rather, Lent is a journey of deepening holiness shaping lives in the image of Christ to praise God and live in friendship with one another.

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

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Barbara Brown Taylor

If nothing else, stories and traditions like these remind Christian interpreters of the Ten Teachings that these teachings have been around a long time. They are never our possession, any more than the God who uttered them is. Instead, we stand among a people counted as God’s peculiar possession, set apart by holy speech and practice for the mending of God’s holy world.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE
Exodus 20:1–17

Focus on Your Teaching

Children this age appreciate knowing what the rules are and, at times, may seem overly concerned about who is not following the rules exactly. Some children may think of rules as barriers in their lives because they get into trouble when they don't follow the rules. As you discuss the Ten Commandments, emphasize God's love and concern for helping us live well as the people of God. Reassure the children that no one can keep the commandments perfectly. Tell them often that God always is ready to forgive us when we fall short and to give us another chance.

Gracious and loving God, help me to grow in understanding your Ten Commandments and making them part of my life. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- ❑ Colors of Lent booklets (from February 28) or use the directions in the sidebar on page 3 to assemble one for each child
- ❑ small table or large box
- ❑ purple cloth
- ❑ two soft balls
- ❑ Bible
- ❑ copies of Resource Sheet 1 on card stock
- ❑ paper clips
- ❑ scissors
- ❑ Color Pack 1, 2, 28, 29
- ❑ *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player

For Responding

- ❑ option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 1, scissors, Resource Sheet 2
- ❑ option 2: Color Pack 3, scissors
- ❑ option 3: drawing paper, crayons, pencils, copies of Resource Sheet 1, old magazines, scissors, glue sticks, stapler (optional)

■ LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, cut out the cards from copies of Resource Sheet 1 (The Ten Commandments) made on card stock, following the directions carefully; fasten each child's set with a paper clip. Make a worship table by covering a small table or large box with a purple cloth and placing Color Pack 1 on it. If you are using option 2 in Responding, cut apart the pictures on Color Pack 3.

Greet the children as they arrive and visit informally with them about rules they have at home and at school.

Gather around the worship table and give each child a Colors of Lent booklet. Remind learners that it is the season of Lent, a time when Christians prepare for Easter. Invite the children to turn to each color as you do and repeat each statement after you:

(Purple) *Remember that Jesus is our king!*

(Green) *Remember how people waved leafy branches / to welcome Jesus.*

(Brown) *Remember how Jesus died on a cross.*

(Yellow) *Remember that God raised Jesus / from death on Easter / and gives us new life too.*

(White) *Remember that in Jesus' name, / God forgives our sins.*

Thank you, God, for loving us. Amen.

Sing "You Shall Love the Lord Your God" (Color Pack 28; track 22 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Save the booklets to use next session.

Tell children you are going to play a game. Form two teams and give each team a soft ball. Say, "One, two, three, go!" The children will likely be puzzled. Some may ask, "What are the

You Shall Love the Lord Your God

You shall love the Lord your God, alleluia!
You shall love the Lord your God, alleluia!
With all your heart and soul and mind, alleluia!
With all your heart and soul and mind, alleluia!

Colors of Lent Booklet

Cut a 3" square from purple, green, brown, yellow, and white construction paper; for each child. Stack in the order listed above. Print "Colors of Lent" on each purple square and staple in the corner.

Be sensitive to any child whose parents are divorced, especially if unfaithfulness may have been a factor. Reassure him or her of God's ongoing love for each family member.

Make this a fun activity. Your goal is for the children to be familiar with the meaning of the Ten Commandments and not to memorize their order perfectly.

rules?" Don't say anything. After a few moments, invite learners to be seated and ask them what would have made the game easier.

Say that the Bible story today is about rules.

EXPLORING

Open your Bible to Exodus and say this is where the story of Moses is told. Invite learners to tell anything they know about Moses. Ask them to listen carefully as you read aloud the following story:

The Israelites were God's people. They were living in Egypt, where they were slaves. They worked very hard, and they were tired and sore. They prayed to God to set them free. God told Moses to rescue these slaves.

After Moses helped the Israelites escape from Egypt, God led them through a wilderness to the land of promise. They were camping at the bottom of a mountain called Mount Sinai. There was a cloud covering Mount Sinai. Moses climbed to the top of Mount Sinai and God spoke to him there.

God said, "Moses, I have some important rules for the Israelites. These commandments will help my people know how to live in loving ways with me and with one another. These rules will help you and the rest of the Israelites know how to live in peace as my people." (*Show Color Pack 2.*)

God wrote the commandments on stone tablets for Moses to take to the people.

Open your Bible to Exodus 20:1–17, saying that God's Ten Commandments are found here and that God's people today still live by these rules. Place a set of commandment cards cut from Resource Sheet 1 (The Ten Commandments) in the center of the group. Read each one aloud. Clarify the meaning of any words, as needed. Work together to sort the commandments into two groups: commandments that tell us how to live well with God and commandments that tell us how to live well with other people. Ask:

✠ What kind of world would it be if everyone obeyed these rules?

Give a set of cards from the resource sheet to each child. Invite learners to read them in unison with you. Discuss:

✠ Why do you think God gave us the Ten Commandments?

✠ How might the Ten Commandments help us love God?

✠ How might the Ten Commandments help us love other people and live with them in peace?

Explain that no person can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly. When we make a mistake or a poor choice, we can ask God to forgive us. God will forgive us and give us another chance.

Show Color Pack 2 and invite learners to imagine Moses and the Israelites singing along with them as they sing “God Is So Good” (Color Pack 29; track 6 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). You may want to add a stanza: *God gives us rules.* (Repeat twice.) *God’s so good to us.*

EASY PREP

God Is So Good

God is so good,
God is so good,
God is so good,
God’s so good to me.

God answers prayers,
God answers prayers,
God answers prayers,
God’s so good to me.

God cares for me,
God cares for me,
God cares for me,
God’s so good to me.

God, you’re so good.
God, you’re so good.
God, you’re so good.
You’re so good to me.
You’re so good to me.

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Commandment Game** Learners will have fun becoming more familiar with the Ten Commandments. Have children spread out their set of commandment cards from Resource Sheet 1 (The Ten Commandments). Explain that you will read some rules to them. If a rule is one of the Ten Commandments, they should jump up and down. If it is not, they should stay seated. Read aloud the rules on Resource Sheet 2 (Commandment Game), pausing after each one for learners to respond. After playing, invite learners to tell which commandment they think may be easiest to keep and which may be hardest. Ask each one to tell one commandment he or she will work at following this week.
- 2. Commandment Skits** Children will act out ways they can obey some of the commandments. Form four pairs or small groups. Give each one a picture cut from Color Pack 3. Make sure each group knows what the words say. Tell pairs to plan how to act out a way they could obey this commandment. After a few moments, have each group read its commandment and act out its scene for the group. Have groups switch pictures and plan a new scene.
- 3. Commandment Picture Display** Children will illustrate ways people can obey the Ten Commandments. Distribute drawing paper, pencils, and crayons. Invite each child to choose a commandment from your set of cards (from Resource Sheet 1 [The Ten Commandments]) and glue that commandment card to his or her paper. Invite learners to think of things people might do to obey the commandment. They can draw pictures of these activities or cut pictures and words from magazines to show these activities and glue them on the paper. (Some children may need to illustrate more than one commandment, and you might do one or two yourself.) After all have finished, invite learners to show their pictures to the group. Create a display, putting the commandments in order. Option: Staple the pages together into a booklet to have in your learning space.

CLOSING

Gather with learners around the worship table. Have them arrange a set of cards cut from Resource Sheet 1 (The Ten Commandments) around Color Pack 1. In unison, read each one aloud.

Pray aloud, asking learners to repeat each line:

Be with us, Lord, through Lenten days.

Be with us, Lord, in work and play.

Be with us, Lord, through day and night.

Be with us, Lord, ’til Easter shines bright. Amen.

Say to each learner: “God loves you, (name).”

The Ten Commandments

Directions: As you look at Exodus 20:1–17 in your Bible, you will note the heading says, “The Ten Commandments.” However, the Bible does not say how to number them. For example, look at verses 2–6: do they contain one or two commandments? Because of this uncertainty, churches vary in how they number the Ten Commandments.

Make a copy of this page on card stock for each learner and two copies for yourself. Cut out the cards. Keep the ten cards that name the Ten Commandments as listed in your church catechism or worship book and discard the remaining card. If you are not sure about this, ask your church educator or pastor.



The Ten Commandments	Worship only God.	Do not worship idols.	Use God’s name with respect.
Remember to honor God’s Sabbath day.	Respect your parents.	Do not kill others.	Be faithful in marriage.
Do not steal.	Do not tell lies about other people.	Do not long for things that belong to other people.	Do not tempt people to be unfaithful to their families.

Commandment Game

Directions: Read each statement aloud. If it is one of the Ten Commandments (marked with *), learners will jump up and down. If it is not a commandment, they will stay seated.



Don't be a tattletale.

Put your bicycle away when you finish riding it.

* Respect your parents.

Wear a helmet when you ride your bike.

* Worship only God.

Brush your teeth twice a day.

Do not be late for school.

* Do not steal.

* Do not long for things that belong to other people.

Remember to smile when you meet someone.

* Use God's name with respect.

Don't touch things that don't belong to you.

* Remember to honor God's Sabbath day.

Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

* Be faithful in marriage.

Remember to fasten your seatbelt.

* Do not kill others.

Take turns on the swings.

Come when your parent or your teacher calls you.

* Do not tell lies about other people.

