

Exod. 20:1–17

Ps. 19

1 Cor. 1:18–25

John 2:13–22

Law Given in Love

**Goal for
the Session**

Tweens will familiarize themselves with the Ten Commandments and appreciate them as guidance and direction from God.

■ P R E P A R I N G F O R T H E S E S S I O N

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

YOU WILL NEED

- purple cloth
- Christ candle, matches
- Bibles
- Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 28
- 2 or 3 different board games
- grocery bag
- newsprint or markerboard
- marker
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- pens or pencils
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2; markers; scissors
- option 2: newspapers, magazines, video-recording device (optional)
- option 3: 10 empty plastic .5 liter bottles, colorful permanent markers, small ball

You can download Scripture passages from Web sites like www.biblegateway.com.

Focus on Your Teaching

Tweens sometimes resist rules. They may bargain for a later bedtime, grumble about mandatory sports practice, or seek to circumvent age-restricted TV and computer settings. Testing limits and breaking rules can contribute to healthy self-development; everyone must learn, for example, when to question authority and how to cope with the natural consequences of their choices. But tweens need to hear that caring adults put good rules in place to protect them from consequences they shouldn't yet face. Good rules define a safe environment in which people can flourish. Today you can help your learners view God's rules in this positive light.

God, may my teaching demonstrate my own desire to live abundantly within your perfect will. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, if your classroom Bibles are not all the same version, make a copy of Psalm 19:7–14 from one version for each learner. Gather two or three different board games and put all the pieces together in a grocery bag. If you are using option 3 in Responding, remove labels from empty plastic .5 liter bottles.

Greet learners as they arrive and ask volunteers to spread a purple cloth in the center of your meeting space and place the Christ candle and Color Pack 1 on it. Gather around the Christ candle, and form two groups to speak the words on Color Pack 1 as a volunteer lights the candle.

Group 1: Jesus Christ is the Light of the World.

Group 2: Whoever follows Jesus has the light of life.

Tell learners today is the third Sunday in Lent, a season for remembering that God does not set us on the journey of faith without giving us some “rules of the road” to follow.

Distribute Bibles or copies of Psalm 19:7–14. Form two groups. Read the psalm aloud, alternating verses between groups. Extinguish the candle.

Form teams of three or four learners. Have teams take turns drawing pieces from the bag of game pieces until each team has five pieces. Challenge each team to invent a game that can be played with the pieces it has drawn. After three minutes, discuss:

- ✠ As you invented your game, how did you determine what rules you would have?
- ✠ Why do games need rules?
- ✠ When else do people need rules to follow?

The heading 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. Teach the numbering of the commandments your church uses.

Some catechisms include discussions of the Ten Commandments that may be helpful to your teaching. Check with your pastor or church educator for suggestions.

EXPLORING

Set the stage for today’s Bible reading by telling learners that after God sent Moses to lead the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt, God’s people needed direction for living their new lives of freedom. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments to deliver to the people as good rules for journeying through life as a community of God’s people. God gave the commandments to help people live healthy and peaceful lives.

Read aloud Color Pack 2 and discuss rules the group follows. Challenge learners to work together to write a list of the Ten Commandments on newsprint or markerboard. Do not say anything to help them. After three minutes, distribute Bibles and ask them to turn to Exodus 20. Recruit volunteers to read aloud verses 1–17. As the text is read, put a check mark next to each correctly identified commandment on the newsprint or markerboard. After the reading, cross out any response that is not a commandment. Discuss:

- ✪ What authority does God claim for giving these commandments? (v. 2)
- ✪ Why does God prohibit the manufacture of idols?
- ✪ What does it mean to misuse, or “take in vain,” God’s name? (Swearing and cursing, also speaking falsely about God.)
- ✪ Why does God command a weekly sabbath day of rest?
- ✪ What promise does God give to those who honor their parents?
- ✪ The commandments in 20:1–11 all help people love God. What do the commandments in 20:12–17 teach about loving our neighbors?

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (In Other Words) and pens or pencils. Read aloud the directions. Do the first one or two as a group, then have learners work individually or in pairs to complete the activity. When learners have finished, ask each tween to read his or her favorite paraphrase to the class.

Display Color Pack 3. Ask:

- ✪ How well do you think this artist understands the Ten Commandments? Why?

Tell learners that Jesus taught a summary of the commandments. Read aloud Matthew 22:36–39. Ask:

- ✪ How is Jesus’ summary helpful?
- ✪ How important do you think the Ten Commandments are for God’s people today? (Emphasize that no one can earn God’s love by keeping the commandments. God gives them in love as a guide for living safe, productive, joyful lives.)

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Rules of Life’s Road** Tweens will consider how the Ten Commandments are beneficial rules for safety and guidance as they create traffic signs depicting them. Invite tweens to name the traffic rules or laws they think are most important. Comment that one way to think of the Ten Commandments is as God’s rules for the road of life. Distribute copies

**EASY
PREP**

of Resource Sheet 2 (Rules of Life's Road). Invite learners to work individually or as pairs to design simple signs to communicate the meaning of three of the commandments to people their age. Challenge them to minimize the number of words they use. Have learners cut out the signs. Gather as a group to review one another's work and create a display of the signs in your learning area. Option: Have tweens post their finished signs around the church building.

Option: If newspapers and magazines are not available, have learners give examples from television shows or movies they have seen.

- 2. Commandment Keepers** Tweens will celebrate stories of people who observe God's commandments. Discuss with learners how the Ten Commandments might be considered good rules for all people. Have learners browse newspapers and magazines for stories of people keeping one or more of the Ten Commandments. (The people involved need not know they are doing so and need not be identified as people of faith.) Once learners have identified a few stories, form small groups. Have each group prepare a presentation of one story that includes telling how the keeping of the commandment(s) benefitted the community. Option: Record each group's presentation to show to others.
- 3. Ten Commandment Ten Pins** Learners will highlight how the Ten Commandments guard them from harm as they play a game. Have learners work together to label and decorate empty plastic .5 liter bottles with permanent markers so each bottle represents one of the Ten Commandments. Arrange the decorated bottles on the floor in a triangle, as bowling pins. Have learners stand as far from the bottles as possible and take turns rolling a small ball to knock down the bottles. After each learner bowls, ask her or him to explain one possible consequence in real life of "knocking down" or not keeping one of the commandments named on the bottles he or she knocked over. Affirm God's unconditional love and forgiveness, and God's gift of another chance.

CLOSING

Gather learners around the Christ candle and light it. Display Color Pack 3. Tell learners this is one artist's vision of Moses bringing the Ten Commandments from God to the Israelites.

Ask:

✠ How do the Ten Commandments guide you in your journey of faith?

Pray aloud, asking tweens to repeat each phrase:

Gracious God, / be with us during this season of Lent. / Comfort us with your presence / as you lead us on our journey of faith. / In Jesus' name. Amen.

Form two groups to sing "Behold, I Am with You" (Color Pack 28; track 2 on *Singing the Feast, 2020–2021*), with one group singing the first part of the line and the second group the echo.

Invite learners to exchange handshakes, high fives, or fist bumps with one another as they say: "Go with God."

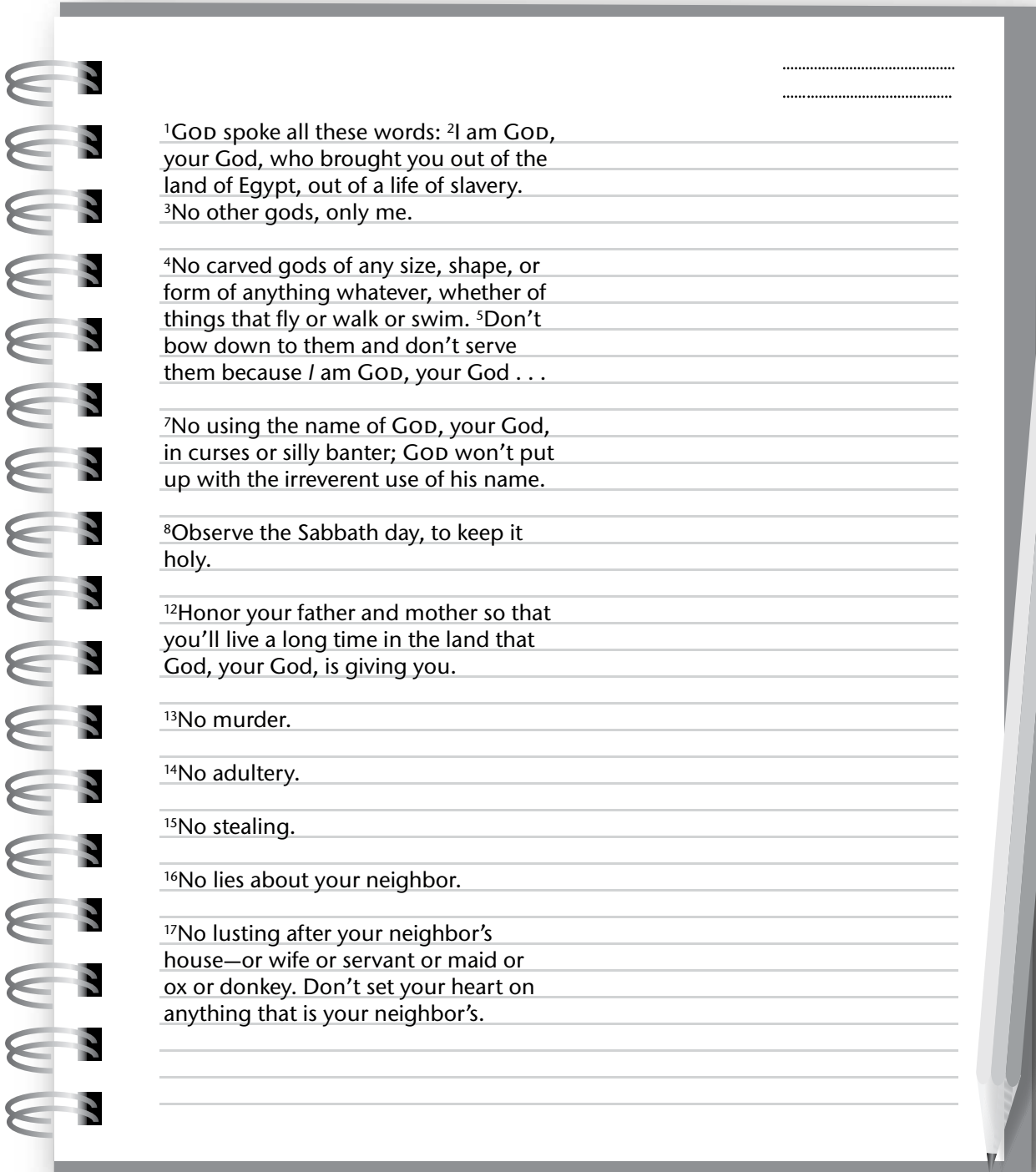
Behold, I Am with You

Behold, I am with you,
(Behold, I am with you)
 And will keep you wherever
 you go, *(And will keep*
you wherever you go)
 And will keep you wherever
 you go. *(And will keep*
you wherever you go)

Behold, I am with you,
(Behold, I am with you)
 And will keep you wherever
 you go, *(And will keep*
you wherever you go)
 And will keep you wherever
 you go. *(And will keep*
you wherever you go)

In Other Words

The text of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17) on this page is from *The Message* version of the Bible. Next to each verse or set of verses, write your own paraphrase—with a twist. Whenever the original is a positive command (what one should do), rewrite it as a negative (what one shouldn't do) and vice versa.



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¹GOD spoke all these words: ²I am GOD, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of a life of slavery.

³No other gods, only me.

⁴No carved gods of any size, shape, or form of anything whatever, whether of things that fly or walk or swim. ⁵Don't bow down to them and don't serve them because I am GOD, your God . . .

⁷No using the name of GOD, your God, in curses or silly banter; GOD won't put up with the irreverent use of his name.

⁸Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

¹²Honor your father and mother so that you'll live a long time in the land that God, your God, is giving you.

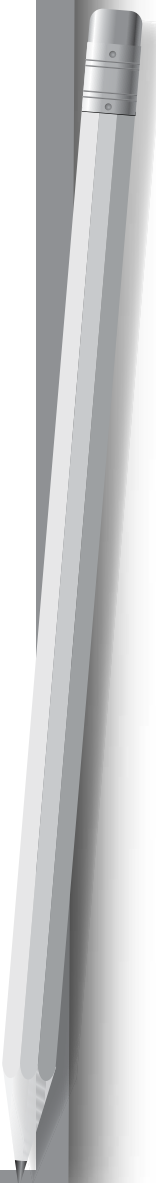
¹³No murder.

¹⁴No adultery.

¹⁵No stealing.

¹⁶No lies about your neighbor.

¹⁷No lusting after your neighbor's house—or wife or servant or maid or ox or donkey. Don't set your heart on anything that is your neighbor's.



Rules of Life's Road

