

Core Study # 9

The 10 Commandments

Passage: Exodus 19:2-8; 20:1-17

Themes: God's covenant with His people

Leaders' Preparation:

Read through the passage several times.

Note any questions that you as the Core leader / co-leader may have about the passage and refer to the NIV Study Bible or a good commentary to help you answer your questions.

Possible introductory Question

- In this Core we will be looking at the 10 Commandments and the Covenant God made with His people. What do you understand a Covenant to mean?
(Consider what is involved in a marriage covenant. Note that a covenant is not just a contract (I will do my part if you do your part), but also involves keeping a promise. Note the quote provided from J.I. Packer at the end of the Study)

Read Exodus 19:2-8 & 20:1-17

Discussion Questions (select a few):

1. **Throughout Exodus God builds a new nation, Israel, a nation He will use to reveal Himself to the entire world. Why would it be important to develop laws when forming a new country?**

It's interesting to note that many nations around the world base their legal system on the 10 commandments, many of the laws in the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament

2. **In Chapter 20 verse 1 God identifies who He is. He is not just any god. He then commands His people not to make an image of Him. What might be some of the images of God we make today, images that replace the true God?**

Note that images are human creations. Whatever we make we automatically think we control. But, God is not One to be controlled. Images often reflect their maker - the artist. A painting or statue will reflect the painter or the one who sculpted it. We are forbidden from re-creating God in our own image. God is very different from who we are. A visible stone or wooden image is limited by time and physical space. God is invisible and can not be limited by any of these. C.S. Lewis in the Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe described Aslan (Jesus) as a wonderfully good but wild lion, not One who is tame and subject to our control.

3. **In Exodus 20:4 God chooses to describe Himself as a jealous God; jealous of our love and affection. Why would jealousy in this context be such a good emotion to have?**

Note that in marriage there is a healthy and important jealousy of a husband and wife for each other.

4. **How do people misuse God's name today(Exodus 20:7)?**

We often equate this commandment with swearing, but it also refers to putting words in God's mouth; claiming that God said something to us or gave us permission to do something when in fact He did not.

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5. **What does it mean today, for you as students at UBC, to observe the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8)?**
6. **When might honoring one's parents differ from obeying them (Exodus 20:12)?**
7. **We are commanded to not murder (Exodus 20:13). Is murder different from killing someone? (Is capital punishment murder? Killing someone in self defense? Killing someone while defending those who can not help themselves? What about war?)**

Application Question:

Which Commandments do you find the easiest to obey? The hardest to obey? Why?

One important purpose of the 10 Commandments is to help sinful humankind recognize just how far away we are from God. God is holy, loving and perfect while we are not. As we attempt to obey the Commandments we realize how easily we fail – and always fail. We all are in desperate need of a Saviour.

A quote from J.I. Packer in 'An Introduction to Covenant Theology'

A covenant relationship is a voluntary mutual commitment that binds each party to the other. Whether it is negotiated, like a modern business deal or a marriage contract, or unilaterally imposed, as all God's covenants are, is irrelevant to the commitment itself; the reality of the relationship depends simply on the fact that mutual obligations have been accepted and pledged on both sides.

Thus, when God tells Abraham, "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you . . . to be your God . . . I will be their God" (Gen. 17:6-8), . . . God is committing himself to Abraham . . . God's covenant commitment expresses eternal election; his covenant love to individual sinners flows from his choice of them to be his for ever in the peace of justification and the joy of glorification. . . . The covenant promise itself, "I will be your God," is an unconditional undertaking on God's part to be "for us" (Rom. 8:31), "on our side" (Ps. 124:1-5), using all his resources for the furthering of the ultimate good of those ("us") to whom he thus pledges himself. "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God" (Ex. 6:7), the covenant promise constantly repeated throughout both testaments (Gen. 17:6-8; Ex. 20:2, 29:45 f.; Lev. 11:45; Jer. 32:38; Ezk. 11:20, 34:30 f., 36:28; 2 Cor. 6:16-18; Rev. 21:2 f.; etc.), may fairly be called the pantechicon promise, inasmuch as every particular promise that God makes is packed into it -- fellowship and communion first ("I will be with you," "I will dwell among them," "I will live among you," etc.), and then the supply of every real need, here and hereafter. Sovereignty and salvation, love, enjoyment, affirmation and assurance, fidelity and fulness . . .

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The God-given covenant carries, of course, obligations. The life of faith and repentance, and the obedience to which faith leads, constitute the covenant-keeping through which God's people receive the fulness of God's covenant blessing. "I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now *if you obey me fully and keep my covenant*, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession" (Ex. 19:4 f.). Covenant faithfulness is the condition and means of receiving covenant benefits, and there is nothing arbitrary in that; for the blessings flow from the relationship, and human rebelliousness and unfaithfulness stop the flow by disrupting the relationship. Israel's infidelity was constantly doing this throughout the Old Testament story, and the New Testament makes it plain that churches and Christians will lose blessings that would otherwise be theirs, should covenant fidelity be lacking in their lives.