

August 18, 2019

“A Different People”, Exodus 20:1-6

The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17 are not just a yardstick to judge others by, nor are they simply a way to get to heaven by obedient actions. They are God’s good instructions which have been lovingly given to His people so that we can live different lives, holy lives, the lives He created for us to live. Whether we are rule followers, rule questioners, or a conflicting combination of both, we can all lean more into the Ten Commandments to experience God’s intention of setting us apart from the world as His people - worshiping differently, loving differently, and living differently.

Why Should We Study the Ten Commandments?

After all, we are not under Old Testament Law, and also in our culture the Ten Commandments are not at all as popular as they used to be - Only 14% of Americans can even name them all.

1. Because they are special.

This is the only part of Scripture where God spoke His laws to the people, wrote them by His own hand, and had a prophet (Moses) write them.

2. Because they are foundational.

The Ten Commandments are the underpinning, the basis, the essence/summary of all the rest of the Old Testament Law. Although, as Christians, we are no longer under the OT Law, and we know that we do not gain approval just by works of the law, it is the same God now who has the same moral heart and the same ethical desires for His people. The Ten Commandments are the essence of God’s ethical heart. Jesus taught that the two greatest commands were to love God and to love our neighbor (Mark 12:28-31). These two had been expanded in the Ten Commandments, and they were given to Israel in 613 Old Testament Laws.

3. Because they are good.

The Ten Commandments are FOR our good, and they ARE good. God introduced these laws to Israel by reminding them that He brought them “out of slavery” (Ex.20:2), connecting the Ten Commandments to freedom in a better world. In the first commandment, God tells us that He alone is God and there are no other gods (Ex. 20:3). Belief in the one true God is the foundation of all the other 9 commandments which flow from God’s moral character. Belief in God is the only logical basis on which any law, any morality/sense of rights and wrong is built. Unbelief in God is without purpose/random. In the second commandment (Ex.20:4), we are to be responsible and not follow past generations by repeating their sins. This second commandment explains the first by prohibiting idols of other gods, and of God Himself. We are to serve and worship the true image of God which is ultimate revealed to us in the saving life and death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ.

4. Because as God’s people, we are called to be different.

To His “treasured possession”, His “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex.10:4-6,), the Lord gives Israel the Ten Commandments. God knew that these ten laws would make Israel not just more moral, but different from all the nations around them. They had an opportunity to show the people around them the character of the one true God - unique and holy, freeing His people from slavery, with a heart for His people to love their neighbors as they did themselves. May we seek His excellence, become His people, & allow Him to change us into different people who draw others to God by reflecting His character by Jesus’ Spirit in and through us.

Discussion Questions:

1. To you, are the Ten Commandments rules and regulations to keep in good standing with God, or an instruction manual for fulfilled Christian life, setting us apart from the world?
2. Is idolatry still a problem, even for believers?
3. How are the Ten Commandments and Jesus’ life related? How was Jesus different?
4. Is worshipping God, being one of His people, your number 1 priority in life?
5. In your mind and experience, has God shown Himself to be truly good? Has He freed you from anything? Does His goodness overflow from your own life to others?