

**LESSON OVERVIEW**

**Week:** 18 | **Passage:** Exodus 19 to 20 | **Title:** God Gives the Law: Loving God and Others

**MEMORY VERSE****Deuteronomy 6:5**

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

**BIG IDEA**

**God's rules are a gift. They show us how to love Him and love each other.**

**CMA FOURFOLD GOSPEL CONNECTION**

**Jesus Our Savior:** Exodus 20 opens with God declaring: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." God saves before He commands. The law does not produce salvation. Salvation has already happened. This is the gospel pattern written into the structure of the Ten Commandments. Jesus fulfills the law perfectly on our behalf and pays for every failure to keep it, delivering us from a bondage deeper than Egypt.

**Jesus Our Sanctifier:** God calls Israel to be a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). That call cannot be achieved through human willpower. Israel proves this almost immediately. The New Covenant sends the Holy Spirit to write the law on hearts rather than stone tablets (Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 3:3). Holiness is always the Spirit's work from the inside out.

**Jesus Our Healer:** The Ten Commandments protect human dignity and community wholeness. Laws against murder, theft, and false witness guard people from real harm. When these are honored, communities flourish. When they are broken, people are wounded. God's law is an act of care for the full person and the full community.

**Jesus Our Coming King:** The Sinai covenant points forward to a greater covenant. Jesus stands on a mountain in Matthew 5 to 7 and expands the law inward into the heart. The kingdom of God fulfills what Sinai began. Every commandment is a glimpse of what life looks like when God is truly King.

## FIVE CORE THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS

- 1. About God:** God is holy, faithful, and relational. He initiates and rescues before making any demands. He does not give rules to prove His authority. He gives them to protect and shape a people He already loves.
- 2. About People:** People need clear direction. Left to ourselves, we drift toward self-destruction and harm to others. The law is not evidence of God's impatience. It is evidence of His wisdom in knowing what we need to live well.
- 3. About Salvation:** The law does not save. Exodus 20:2 establishes this before the first commandment is given. Salvation precedes the law every time. The law shows us the standard we cannot meet on our own and drives us toward the Savior who meets it for us.
- 4. About Scripture:** The Ten Commandments appear in two accounts, Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, with remarkable consistency across manuscripts. Ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties of the same era follow the same literary structure God uses here, confirming the historical setting and lending credibility to the text.
- 5. About the Trinity:** The Father speaks the commandments from the mountain. The Son fulfills every commandment perfectly and bears the penalty for our failure (Matthew 5:17; Galatians 3:13). The Holy Spirit writes the law on believing hearts, producing obedience from the inside rather than imposing it from the outside (Ezekiel 36:27).

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Israel arrives at Mount Sinai approximately three months after leaving Egypt (Exodus 19:1). The Sinai Peninsula is a dramatic wilderness landscape of granite peaks and desert plains. Mount Sinai, also called Horeb, already carries sacred significance. This is where God first appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Returning here is not coincidental.

Ancient Near Eastern law codes were common. The Code of Hammurabi and Hittite suzerainty treaties follow a recognized form: identify the great king, recount what the great king has done for the people, list the obligations, and describe the consequences of faithfulness or failure. The Ten Commandments follow this exact pattern. God is not using an unfamiliar legal form. He is speaking in the political and legal language His people already understood and elevating it with a far higher moral content.

The theophany at Sinai involves thunder, lightning, thick cloud, fire, smoke, earthquake, and an intensifying trumpet blast. The text presents these as real, observable events witnessed by the entire Israelite nation. The scale and public nature of this event are significant for its historical credibility. This was not a private vision. It was a national encounter.

## THE STORY EXPLAINED

Exodus 19 opens at the base of Mount Sinai. God calls Moses up and delivers a message for all of Israel. He frames the coming covenant on what He has already done: He carried them on eagles wings and brought them to Himself. Now He invites them into a formal covenant relationship, naming them His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. The people respond in agreement.

God instructs Moses to prepare the people for three days. They wash their clothes and consecrate themselves. The mountain is declared off limits under penalty of death. This is not cruelty. It communicates that God's holiness cannot be approached casually. Holiness and intimacy are not opposites, but holiness requires preparation and reverence.

On the third day the atmosphere erupts: thunder, lightning, dense cloud, fire, smoke, earthquake, and a trumpet that grows progressively louder. God descends in fire. Moses leads the trembling people to the foot of the mountain. God speaks directly to all of them.

Exodus 20 records the Ten Commandments in two movements. The first four address Israel's relationship with God: exclusive worship, no idols, honor for God's name, and Sabbath rest. The final six address relationships with other people: honoring parents, and prohibitions against murder, adultery, theft, false testimony, and coveting. Jesus will later call these two movements by their names: love God and love your neighbor (Matthew 22:37 to 39).

The people respond with fear and ask Moses to mediate. Moses reassures them that God's purpose is to build healthy reverence that guards them from sin, not to destroy them. Moses then approaches the thick darkness where God is, and God continues giving further regulations.

## COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS

What People Sometimes Think	What the Bible Actually Says
Following the Ten Commandments is how we earn God's love.	God saved Israel before giving any commandment. Exodus 20:2 establishes rescue before obligation. Obedience flows from a relationship that already exists, not as the price of entering one.
The Ten Commandments are only for Jewish people.	Jesus summarized them as love for God and love for neighbor, commandments He called the greatest of all. These principles reflect God's character and apply to all who belong to Him.
The law is mostly a list of things not to do.	Each prohibition implies a positive. Do not murder means protect life. Do not steal means be generous. Do not lie means speak truth. The law is a portrait of active love in ten specific forms.
God gave the law because He was angry with Israel.	The context is covenant love. God frames the commandments with a declaration of rescue. The law is the structure of a relationship, not the expression of anger.
Christians do not need to pay attention to the Old Testament law.	Jesus said He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). Paul confirms the law is holy, righteous, and good (Romans 7:12). The law reveals God's character, which does not change.

**QUESTIONS CHILDREN OFTEN ASK**

What a Child Might Ask	How to Answer It Simply
Why was the mountain on fire? Was God angry?	God was not angry. The fire and thunder showed His power and holiness. Think of it as a signal that something very important was happening. It was not a threat. It was a display that demanded attention.
Do I still have to follow the Ten Commandments?	Yes, and the Holy Spirit helps you do it. Jesus said loving God and loving others is what all the commandments are really about. When you follow Jesus, He helps you do this from the inside rather than just trying harder on the outside.
What happens when I break one of the commandments?	God already knew we would struggle to keep them perfectly. That is part of why Jesus came. He lived the life we could not live and paid for the times we fall short. We confess and are forgiven.
Why does God care if I want what someone else has?	Wanting what belongs to someone else is called coveting. It leads to stealing, lying, and harming relationships. God knows that our thoughts become our actions. He addresses the root before it grows.
Is the Sabbath still a rule?	Christians honor the principle of regular rest and worship. Most worship on the first day of the week because Jesus rose on that day. The specific day has some flexibility for Christians today, but the pattern of rest and worship remains.

**APOLOGETICS PREPARATION FOR TEACHERS**

A skeptic might argue that Moses invented the Ten Commandments and that older law codes, such as the Code of Hammurabi, prove the commandments were borrowed. The honest answer is that similar codes actually confirm the historical setting. God was not creating something alien to the ancient world. He was speaking in a form His people already recognized while raising the moral standard to something no other ancient law code achieved, particularly in its insistence on one God and the equal dignity of all people.

Another objection concerns the severity of warnings attached to the commandments. Parents can be reminded that the consequences described in the law reflect the real harm that comes from breaking these principles in actual communities. Murder, theft, and dishonesty have always damaged and destroyed people and societies. God is not being harsh. He is being truthful about what happens when these boundaries are ignored.

**CHRIST CONNECTION****How This Story Points to Jesus**

Jesus stands on a mountain in Matthew 5 and takes the law deeper. Do not murder becomes do not hate. Do not commit adultery becomes do not look with lust. The law was always about the heart. Jesus reveals this and then does what no one else could: He keeps every commandment perfectly and bears the penalty for everyone who fails.

In Hebrews 12, those who belong to Jesus are told they have not come to the terrifying mountain of Sinai. They have come to Jesus Himself, the mediator of a new and better covenant. The law showed us the standard. Jesus met it for us. We approach God not with terror but with confidence through the work of Christ.

**HEART PREPARATION AND TEACHER PRAYER****Before You Walk In**

You are about to hand children a lens for understanding all of God's Word. The Ten Commandments are not a dusty religious relic. They are a window into God's character and a guide for human flourishing. Every child in your room today will carry fragments of this lesson for the rest of their life. That is not pressure. It is privilege.

*Lord, give me wisdom to teach your law with grace and not fear. Help me show these children that your rules come from your love and not your anger. Let them see that you are a Father who wants them to know how to live well. Make your Word land in their hearts today. Amen.*