

The Ten Commandments – Part 1 (Ex. 20:1-11)

A Small Group Outline



1. Praise *(Purpose: To worship God)*

- What are you thankful for this week? *(let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God

2. Pray *(Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)*

- What challenges did you have this week? *(write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Go into a season of prayer

3. Review *(Purpose: To learn accountability)*

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? *(e.g. Who did you share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)*
- Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.

4. Give *(Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)*

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

5. Discover *(Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)*

• **Notes for the facilitator**

- Read *Patriarchs & Prophets (PP)*, pp. 305-307
- God's commandments are an expression of His love to God and love to mankind (see Matt. 22:37-40). Thus love is the essence of God's law.
- In fact, we cannot keep God's law without loving Him. Notice in all of these verses how how precedes keeping:
 - But showing love to a thousand generations of those who **love** me and **keep** my commandments" (Ex. 20:6)
 - "**Love** the LORD your God and **keep** his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always" (Deut. 11:1)
 - "I command you today to **love** the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to **keep** His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess." (Deut. 30:16)
 - "If you **love** me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15)
 - By this we know that we love the children of God, when we **love** God and **keep** His commandments (1 John 5:2)
- If our we love God, then commandments keeping as an outflow of that relationship, is not burdensome – see 1 John 5:3.
- **Commandment 1:** "Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship. Man is forbidden to give to any other object the first place in his affections or his service. **Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god**" (PP 305)

- Most nations worshiped a plethora of gods. They had gods for each season and event. They had fertility gods, war gods, harvest gods, love gods, sun gods, weather gods, ocean gods, mountain gods, valley gods, after life gods, cow gods, bird gods, reptile gods, etc. etc. The idea was the more the better. **Having so many gods made people feel like they had a god for each situation so all their bases were covered, or they would be protected in all kinds of situations that they might face.** If one god was too weak or ill equipped in one situation, hopefully one of the other gods could help” (<https://studyandobey.com/inductive-bible-study/exodus-studies/exodus-20/>).
- **Commandment 2:** “The second commandment forbids the worship of the true God by images or similitudes. Many heathen nations claimed that their images were mere figures or symbols by which the Deity was worshiped, but God has declared such worship to be sin. **The attempt to represent the Eternal One by material objects would lower man's conception of God.** The mind, turned away from the infinite perfection of Jehovah, would be attracted to the creature rather than to the Creator. **And as his conceptions of God were lowered, so would man become degraded**” (PP 306)
- “The real danger of images is that God becomes localised. We capture Him, so to speak, by a creation of our own hands. We ‘meet’ Him most easily in places and things that we have set up. We can begin to control God and use Him for our purposes...” (The Abundant Life Amplifier: *Exodus*, Jon Dybdahl)
- “‘I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.’ The close and sacred relation of God to His people is represented under the figure of marriage. **Idolatry being spiritual adultery, the displeasure of God against it is fitly called jealousy**” (PP 306).
- Vs 5: *Jealous God:* God refuses to share His glory with idols (Isa. 42:8; 48:11). He declines the worship and service of a divided heart (Ex. 34:12–15; Deut. 4:23, 24; 6:14, 15; Joshua 24:15, 19, 20) – SDA Bible Commentary
- “‘Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.’
 - “It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but **they are not punished for the parents’ guilt**, except as they participate in their sins. It is usually the case, however, that children walk in the steps of their parents. **By inheritance and example the sons become partakers of the father's sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation.** This fearful truth should have a solemn power to restrain men from following a course of sin” (PP 306).
 - **“God does not penalize one individual for the wrong deeds of another (Eze. 18:2–24). Each man stands before God, responsible only for his own acts.** At the same time God does not interfere with the laws of heredity in such a way as to protect one generation from the misdeeds of its fathers, as that would be inconsistent with His character and His principles of dealing with men. It is only through these laws of heredity, which were of course ordained by the Creator in the beginning (see Gen. 1:21, 24, 25), that divine justice visits the ‘iniquity’ of one generation upon the next” – *SDA Bible Commentary*
- “Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments.” To those who are faithful in His service, mercy is promised, not merely to the third and fourth generation as is the wrath threatened against those who hate Him, but to thousands of generations” (PP 306)
- **Commandment 3:** “This commandment not only prohibits false oaths and common swearing, but it forbids us to use the name of God in a light or careless manner, without regard to its awful significance. **By the thoughtless mention of God in common conversation, by appeals to Him in trivial matters, and by the frequent and**

thoughtless repetition of His name, we dishonor Him. ‘Holy and reverend is His name.’ Psalm 111:9. All should meditate upon His majesty, His purity and holiness, that the heart may be impressed with a sense of His exalted character; and His holy name should be uttered with reverence and solemnity” (PP 306).

- We also take God’s name in vain by:
 - Swearing falsely (perjury): that is, by deceptively using God’s name in oaths and pledges for personal advantage – see Matt. 5:33-37
 - Taking on the name ‘**Christian**’, and then living in contravention of the principles and values of Christianity.
- **Commandment 4:** “The Sabbath is not introduced as a new institution but as having been founded at creation. It is to be remembered and observed as the memorial of the Creator’s work. Pointing to God as the Maker of the heavens and the earth, it distinguishes the true God from all false gods. **All who keep the seventh day signify by this act that they are worshipers of Jehovah.** Thus the Sabbath is the sign of man’s allegiance to God as long as there are any upon the earth to serve Him. **The fourth commandment is the only one of all the ten in which are found both the name and the title of the Lawgiver.** It is the only one that shows by whose authority the law is given. Thus it contains the seal of God, affixed to His law as evidence of its authenticity and binding force” (PP 307)
- “God has given men six days wherein to labor, and He requires that their own work be done in the six working days. **Acts of necessity and mercy are permitted on the Sabbath, the sick and suffering are at all times to be cared for; but unnecessary labor is to be strictly avoided.** ‘Turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and ... honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure.’ Isaiah 58:13. Nor does the prohibition end here. ‘Nor speaking thine own words,’ says the prophet. Those who discuss business matters or lay plans on the Sabbath are regarded by God as though engaged in the actual transaction of business. **To keep the Sabbath holy, we should not even allow our minds to dwell upon things of a worldly character.** And the commandment includes all within our gates. The inmates of the house are to lay aside their worldly business during the sacred hours. All should unite to honor God by willing service upon His holy day” (PP 307).
- A few components that highlight the richness of the Sabbath:
 - The Sabbath is a sign of God’s sanctifying work in the lives of His children – Eze. 20:12, 20.
 - It differentiates God (with a capital ‘G’) from all false gods – Jer. 10:11
 - The Sabbath is a protest against the exploitation of people, resources, etc. The commandment says that your “manservant and maidservant” should also rest (Ex. 20:10). [Fritz Guy]
 - The Sabbath stands for liberation from enslavement to material goods. On a Sabbath we rest from earning our bread and chasing after material goods. It tells us that our value and dignity is not dependent on our economic status.
 - It has therapeutic value – an antidote against stress.
 - The Sabbath points to a **personal** God who is interested in spending quality time with His creation each week.
 - The Sabbath is a sign of equality. On the Sabbath the servant and master sit next to each other. There are no role distinctions.
 - The Sabbath points forward to eternity - it is like a weekly instalment of heaven, of experiencing the presence of God.
 - It points to the deeper spiritual rest God offers through faith in Him (Heb. 4:8-9)

- Sabbath keeping principles (by Staci Osterman):
 1. **The Sabbath is God’s day, not ours** (Ex. 20:10, Isa. 58:13, Matt. 12:8). Even though God made the Sabbath for humanity’s benefit (Mark 2:27, 28), He still retains the right as Lord of that day. He did not give that over to mankind.
 - In keeping the Sabbath we must always remember that this is God’s day and not ours. It is not about our favourite conversation topics or our pleasures and activities. It is about finding delight in what pleases God and honouring Him in all we do and say on that day. When we do this, God promises to greatly bless us.
 2. **On Sabbath we should gather with other Sabbath-keepers to worship God** (Lev. 23:3, cf. Heb. 10:25).
 - If there is a Sabbath-keeping church in the area, we should attend it just as Jesus would on the Sabbath. We should look forward to this time to corporately pray, study the Bible, sing, and hear the Word of God preached. This time should not be neglected.
 3. **The Sabbath is to be a day for relieving human suffering and bringing healing and restoration to others** (Luke 4:31-39, cf. Luke 6:6-10; 13:11-16; 14:1-5; John 5:9; 9:14.)
 - Visiting the elderly, caring for the sick, feeding the homeless, praying for the oppressed, encouraging the despondent, studying the Bible with others, singing to the chronically ill who cannot make it to church, attending spiritual retreats, reconnecting with family or friends to heal tensions that may have developed – all of these are appropriate activities on the Sabbath. Each demonstrates the principle of restoring others to wholeness.
 4. **The Sabbath is to be a day for nurturing family relationships** (Lev. 19:3)
 - This can be done by having a special Sabbath dinner, family worship, and just visiting and sharing with each other. Use the Sabbath as an opportunity to pull the family together.
 5. **The Sabbath is for fellowship with Christian friends** (Luke 14:1)
 - Spending time with other believers on the Sabbath should not be limited to just the church service. Seek to spend time together in conversation, eating, Bible study, nature, and service to others.
 6. **The Sabbath is to be a day to celebrate God’s goodness and to praise Him** (Ps. 92)
 - This can be done through singing of hymns and spiritual songs (v. 1), playing musical instruments (v. 3), and the sharing of testimonies of God’s faithfulness in our lives (v. 2). You might want to have a “blessing book” in which your family records on the Sabbath how God has blessed them during the previous week. Take time to thank God for these blessings and share them with others.
 7. **The Sabbath is for enjoying and meditating on the beautiful world God has created** (Ps. 111:2-4)
 - Taking walks or hikes in nature, looking for object lessons in nature that teach spiritual truths, and watching music nature videos are all ways you can meditate on God’s goodness in His created works. Being in nature on the Sabbath can be very relaxing.
 8. **The Sabbath is to be a day to serve others in love and to witness for God** (Matt. 12:11, 12)
 - While we are not do “our work” upon the Sabbath, we are not prevented from doing God’s work upon the Sabbath. What is God’s work? To preach, to teach, to minister to needs, to save from ruin, to heal, to bless. Activities

Jesus would do on the Sabbath are ones we can feel comfortable doing as well.

- *Read Exodus. 20:1-11. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** (use only a few). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - Why do you think the Ten Commandments are introduced with Ex. 20:2?
 - Why do people often worship more than one god?
 - Why must God be first and above all in every area of life?
 - Give examples of modern gods that we can place before God?
 - How would you respond to a person who says: I worship images because they give me a tangible reminder of who God is?
 - Why does God describe Himself as jealous? How is God's jealousy different from human jealousy? *(ask one question at a time)*
 - What is the meaning of Ex. 20:5? Does God punish children for the sins of their parents?
 - In what ways can we take God's name in vain?
 - What do you think is the rationale behind giving the third commandment?
 - Take the first 3 commandments and rephrase them positively.
 - What are the benefits and blessings of the Sabbath?
 - How can the Sabbath be observed in ways that honour God? What things dishonour Him on the Sabbath? *(ask one question at a time)*
- **Application Questions** *(select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT)*
 - What stood out for you in these commandments that you would like to personally apply in your life?
 - What are the things that are currently absorbing your life, that could 'innocently' be taking your attention away from God?
 - Share what the Sabbath personally means to you?
 - Share how you / your family generally celebrate(s) the Sabbath every week?
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group's secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. "I commit to timeously preparing for the Sabbath so that I am not rushed or stressed out when entering its holy hours."

6. Share *(Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith)*

- Do you have anyone you could share today's lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. Closing prayer

Prepared by Shandrell Penniken / Northern Conference