

## God's Top Ten #10

Series: Epic Journey: From Where We Are to Where God Wants Us

Exodus 19-20

**Introduction:** Exodus 19, verse 1..."On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai.

2After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.

3Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 4'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, 6you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...'

Now go to chapter 20, verse 1...

*And God spoke all these words: 2'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*

*3'You shall have no other gods before me.*

*4'You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

*7'You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*

*8'Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.*

***11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.***

***12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.***

***13 "You shall not murder.***

***14 "You shall not commit adultery.***

***15 "You shall not steal.***

***16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.***

***17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (NIV)***

## **Let's PRAY**

Those are the Ten Commandments, but if you keep reading, God gives a lot of additional commands, all the way through chapter 23.

In fact, we see three types of Laws in the Old Testament. There is Ceremonial law, Civil law, and Moral law.

**Ceremonial Law** had to do with those things based on the sacrificial system.

All the Laws about the Tabernacle and later the Temple; All the Laws about the priests; were based on offering sacrifices to God. These laws were just a shadow, just a picture of what was to come.

When Christ came and died on the cross; He was the perfect sacrifice. He paid the price for the sins of ALL people of ALL time.

**Another type of Law in the Old Testament was the Civil Law.**

Civil Laws were those instructions that told you what to do if my cow kicks down your fence, or your goat bites my servant. They often have to do with personal injury or property damage.

**The Moral Law** is summarized in the 10 Commandments.

Moral law is intended for all people for all time.

There is a story that illustrates this: The captain of a navy ship saw faint lights in the distance. Immediately he told his signalman to send a message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south." Promptly a return message read: "Alter your course 10 degrees north."

The captain was angered. So, he sent a second message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south--I am the captain!" Soon another message was received: "Alter your course 10 degrees north--I am a seaman third class."

Furious, the captain sent a third message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south- I am a battleship." Then came the reply: "Alter your course 10 degrees north-I am a lighthouse."

The Ten Commandments are heaven's road map that gives us a spiritual and moral direction. They are moral absolutes, that are non-negotiable. Not only do the Ten Commandments guide us in the right paths, but they also keep us from the wrong paths.

When Christ died, he paid the price for our sin, but he didn't say, "Well, go ahead, lie, cheat and steal! Go ahead, commit adultery! Murder! Think about the Sermon on the Mount.

So even though we are not required by God to obey the Ceremonial and the Civil Laws in the Old Testament, we ARE required to obey the Moral Law.

What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think about the Ten Commandments? For some of you, it stirs up positive emotions; it's comforting to know that there are definitive standards of right and wrong. For some of you, it brings back memories of strict, legalistic church experiences you had as a child, that most likely left you with feelings of guilt and shame.

**What I'd like to do today is to get beyond some of that emotion and look at the Ten Commandments in the context in which they were given.**

Remember: the people of Israel were on this epic journey between slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. God was using their 40-year journey through the

wilderness to shape them and prepare them for life in their new community. **God is taking each of us from where we are to the abundant life in Christ.**

**Illustration:** Jan Davis, 60, a professional veteran parachutist, was involved in a dangerous sport called BASE jumping----leaping off fixed objects like cliffs and towers. It was while BASE jumping that she fell to her death October 22, 1999. Her husband, who was filming the jump, and several reporters were stunned when Jan, the 4th of 5 jumpers, fell for 20 seconds and crashed into the rocks.

Her chute had not opened properly. She was jumping off the 3,200-foot granite cliff, El Capitan, in Yosemite National Park, California. She and the other jumpers knew that BASE jumping was illegal in Yosemite Park, because there had already been six deaths in Yosemite due to BASE jumping. The five jumpers were protesting the park's jumping restrictions and, ironically, were jumping to prove that the sport is safe. These jumpers not only knew the risks, but they also knew the law and deliberately broke it. Jan Davis paid with her life.

**Many people think they can deliberately violate God's law. But eventually people learn, sometimes the hard way, that God's laws are there for our well-being.** (Citation: Jonathan R. Mutchler, Ferndale, Washington; source: Kiley Russell, Associated Press [10-23-99]).

A lot of people assume that the purpose of the Ten Commandments is a checklist that qualifies people to be accepted by God. If I do a good job keeping these rules, God will accept me; if I don't, God won't. And God says, "You've got it backwards! I have accepted you and rescued you, now let's talk about our relationship." **The Bible calls that "grace."**

In Exodus 19:4, God says, **'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.'**

In other words, the first thing God wants them to remember is how they got here. God is saying, "The way you got here, the way you got free, is that I carried you. It's not because of anything you did! You just held on for the ride.

If you believe that God's love and acceptance of you is determined by your obedience to the rules, you will live in fear and insecurity and self-doubt.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, ***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9not by works, so that no one can boast.”*** (NIV)

In the introduction to her book, The Ten Commandments, Dr. Laura Schlessinger writes; "Each day we make many, seemingly minute decisions about things that don't really seem earth-shattering. So, what if we broke a promise? So, what if we find passion in another bed while we are still married? So, what if we are too focused on work, TV, or clubs to spend time with our family? So, what if religion is not a big deal in our lives? When one adds up all the so-what's," one ends up with a life without direction, meaning, purpose, value, integrity, or long-range joy."

The Ten Commandments concisely, clearly, and compassionately outlines the grace of God and what our response to that grace should look like.

We are free from the law in at least two senses:

1. We are free from the obligation to keep the law as a way to get to heaven (Gal. 2:16)
2. We are free from the law's punishment (Rom. 8:1-2)

Jesus summed up the entire Bible in just two sentences in Matthew 22:37-40, ***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38This is the first and greatest commandment. 39And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*** (NIV)

**The 10 Commandments Open our eyes to see:**

1. **GRACE** – in the law, we see a standard we can't live, so, we find grace.

Rom 5:20-21, ***“The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, 21so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** (NIV)

2. **THE GOSPEL** – we see the need of the gospel because of the law.

**Rom 7:7 *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."***

### **3. HOLINESS – separation from the world and sin**

**Rom 12:1-2 *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."***

### **4. PURITY**

**Rom 8:1-4 *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. (3) For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, (4) that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."***

### **5. BLESSINGS**

**Psalms 19:7-11 says, *The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. 9The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.***

***10They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. 11By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward." (NIV)***

**Why did Israel need such an obvious and elementary introduction?** It's like a football coach saying to his players, "Men, this is a football." We've got to remember that Israel had been in Egyptian captivity for 400 years. For 400 years Israel had been subjected to Egyptian culture, religion, and oppression.

They came to Egypt as a handful of people running from a famine. All the ritual, all the stories that we know of Israel didn't exist until after their enslavement. They had been completely indoctrinated into Egyptian culture.

No stories. No songs. No scriptures. Nothing to shape and mold their faith. So, God began with the basics. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt. I am your savior. Your deliverer.

Think about this:

## **I. The Ten Commandments are rooted in relationships.**

### **The first four all have to do with loving God:**

- No other God's before me — God is number One!
- No idols — No substitutes for God!
- God's name is holy — Don't take God for granted!
- The Sabbath is holy — Time spent with God is a priority!

### **And the next six all have to do with loving others:**

- Honor parents — Respect and submission are critically important skills!
- No murder — Life is priceless!
- No adultery — Commitment is priceless!
- No stealing — Don't deny others what God has given them!
- No lying — A truthful God expects truthful people!
- No greed — Be satisfied and content.

These are not arbitrary laws that require blind obedience to an invisible authoritarian. Vs.5 says, "If you keep my covenant." A covenant is a sacred promise between two parties. You can have a contract without having a relationship. But you can't have a covenant without a relationship.

This first command is so foundational to the rest.

1. The First Commandment tells us to put God first.

2. The First Commandment tells us that God is passionate about us.
3. The First Commandment calls us to trust God wholeheartedly.

The Ten Commandments don't work with people who don't have a relationship with God. Why should a person avoid stealing if he or she doesn't acknowledge the God who said, "Thou shalt not steal."? Why should a person honor their marriage commitments if they haven't already made a commitment to the God who said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."?

## II. The Ten Commandments outline our response to the grace of God.

Exodus 19:1- 2 uses the word "After" twice. After what? ***"After I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself."***

Before God ever commands them to do anything or to refrain from doing anything, He saves them. Moses did not show up in Egypt with two stone tablets and say, "If you guys will agree to obey all these commands, God will deliver you from Egyptian slavery." He showed up and said, "God has heard your cry and has sent me to deliver you." Then, and only then, did God outline the response Israel was to make.

Vs. 5 says, ***"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession."***

20:2 "who brought you out of the land of Egypt?" **Before God launches into His demands of us, He reminds us of His love for us.**

This verse is foundational before you even talk about the Ten Commandments.

When they were entrapped in Egypt with no hope, he rescued them.

When they were thirsty, he opened a spring in the desert.

When they hungered, he fed them with manna and quail.

When He says, "Thou shalt not . . ." He is simply saying, "Don't hurt yourself."

When He says, "Thou shalt . . ." He is simply saying, "Help yourself to happiness."



## **In other words, Deliverance first. Commandments second.**

The law doesn't save us, but it does describe how saved people respond to the grace of God that saved them.

### **III. The Ten Commandments require personal responsibility for the well-being of the community.**

Every lie you tell or tolerate, every covetous thought you allow to live longer than a flash, every secret lust, every act of dishonesty, all of them matter. And the only way you are going to see your life and family and community healed is if you take personal responsibility to make it a holier, healthier community by beginning with yourself.

God issued the first command. You shall have no other gods before me. The Egyptians served many gods, and each plague of Egypt was a direct assault to one of those gods. The Nile was worshipped as a god, so Jehovah turned it to blood. The sun was worshipped, so God darkened it. The first born was worshipped. So, God killed them.

**The power of the Ten Commandments lies not in the fact that they are laws, but in that they are descriptions of how people live in relationship with God and each other.**

### **CONCLUSION:**

Moses has been up on the mountain receiving God's commands. In chapter 24, he comes down from the mountain, AND the next morning he gets up and builds an altar at the foot of the mountain, and they offer sacrifices. And here's what happens next...Exodus 24, verse 7, ***“Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.”***

***8Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”***

The people hear all the commands, and say, 'We'll do it!' And then Moses does this strange thing: he takes blood from the sacrifices, and he sprinkles it on the

people. Why? Because despite the people's good intentions, they would never be able to obey all the commands. Which was a huge problem, because God is perfectly holy, and by His very nature He must judge sin.

At the same time, God deeply loved these people, and He wanted to live in covenant relationship with them. So, what did God do? He came up with a way to be perfectly just, and perfectly loving at the same time. He provided a substitute to be judged in place of the people. So that sprinkled blood was a reminder they were covered by the blood of the sacrifice.

The ultimate purpose of the Ten Commandments is: **Dependence on Christ.** We're no different from that group of Israelites at the bottom of Mt. Sinai. We have good intentions of living good lives, but on our own we fail.

Paul described his struggle in Romans 7: ***18b For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do-this I keep on doing.***

Let me tell you three things you'll find if you let the Law drive you to Christ.

First, you'll find **PERFECTION**. In Matthew chapter 5:17, Jesus said, "***Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.***"

Jesus lived out the Commandments! So, if you want to get the clearest picture of what it looks like to follow God's law, look at Jesus!

Secondly, in Christ you'll find **PARDON**. One of the greatest verses in the Bible-Romans 8, verse 1: ***Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*** No condemnation! The blood that was sprinkled on the people at the bottom of Mt. Sinai and the blood from countless other sacrifices over the next 1,400 years, all culminated in the final sacrifice of Jesus. Because of what he did on the cross, we are pardoned for all our sin.

Thirdly, when you come to Christ, you're going to find **POWER**.

If you don't have Christ, the commandments of God are depressing and frustrating and unrealistic. But as you cultivate your walk with Christ, you'll find yourself with the power to do what you couldn't do before, because the resurrection life of Christ will be flowing through you.

***“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus... (2)  
For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of  
sin and death. (Romans 8:1a-2, NIV)***