

MESSAGE SUMMARY

In Exodus 20, God gives the Ten Commandments to Israel at Mount Sinai shortly after rescuing them from slavery in Egypt. These commands were not given so people could earn God's approval through rule-keeping, nor were they given so people could ignore them in the name of freedom. Instead, the commandments reveal God's heart and expose the true condition of our own hearts. They function like a mirror or diagnostic tool that shows us our sin and our need for a Savior. Ultimately, the law points us to Jesus, the One who perfectly fulfilled the law on our behalf. The Ten Commandments do not save people; they shape people by revealing our need for grace and teaching us how to love God and love others.

MAIN POINTS**Point 1: Avoid the Error of Religion - Trying to obey God to earn His acceptance (Exodus 20:1–17; Matthew 22:37–40).**

Grace comes before obedience; God rescued Israel before giving them the law. Rule-keeping cannot make God owe you blessing; religion often says, "If I obey, then God must reward me." The commandments are not a ladder to climb to God; they reveal our need for a Savior.

Point 2: Avoid the Error of Rebellion - Rejecting God's commands in the name of freedom (Exodus 20:1–17; Matthew 22:37–40).

True freedom is not ignoring God's authority; rejecting God's commands leads to making other things our gods. Everyone worships something; career, success, approval, pleasure, or money can become functional "gods." The commandments show what love looks like, commandments 1–4: loving God and commandments 5–10: loving others.

Point 3: The Commandments Reveal the Heart (Exodus 20:1–17; Matthew 5:17). The commandments reveal God's character; they show God's holiness, justice, and love. The commandments expose our sin; like an X-ray of the human heart, they show where we fall short. The commandments point us to Jesus; Jesus did not abolish the law but fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17). He is the greater mediator who saves us.

Big Idea: The 10 Commandments do not save people, they shape people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did God give the Ten Commandments after rescuing Israel from Egypt? *Possible Answer:* God gave the law after salvation to show that obedience flows from relationship, not the other way around. Israel was already rescued before receiving the law (Exodus 20:1–2). This shows that grace comes before obedience (Exodus 20:1–2; Ephesians 2:8–10). Remember, the law reveals and restrains sin and points people to Jesus as their Savior.

2. Which commandment most exposes a struggle in your heart right now? *Possible Answer:* you might realize that coveting or seeking approval has become a deeper issue of worship. The commandments often reveal hidden idols in your heart that compete with God (Exodus 20:17; Psalm 139:23–24).

3. What practical step can help you love God or others more faithfully this week? *Possible Answer:* you might commit to honoring God in speech, showing forgiveness instead of anger, or practicing Sabbath rest to trust God more deeply. These actions reflect the heart behind the commandments (Matthew 22:37–40; James 1:22).

GOSPEL CONNECTION

The Ten Commandments reveal something deeply important: you cannot save yourself. When you honestly look at the law, it exposes the reality that you have not loved God with all your heart or loved your neighbor as yourself. The law is meant to lead you to the only One who kept it perfectly, Jesus Christ!

Jesus is the greater mediator Moses pointed toward. He fulfilled the law perfectly, died for our sins, and rose again so that anyone who repents and believes in Him can be forgiven and made new.

If you are not yet following Christ, the invitation is simple and urgent: turn from your sin and trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord. He alone can rescue you. If you already believe in Christ, remember that the gospel continues to shape your life. Instead of trying to earn God's love, you now obey because you already have it. Let the commandments reveal your heart, let Jesus rescue your soul, and let God's love reshape the way you live.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Monday — Grace Comes Before Obedience

Key Verse: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (Exodus 20:2)

Reflection: Before God gave Israel the commandments, He reminded them that He had already rescued them. Their obedience was meant to flow from gratitude and relationship, not from a desire to earn His favor. In the same way, your relationship with God begins with His grace, not your performance. God saves first and then shapes His people to live differently.

Application Question: do you ever feel like you must earn God’s approval through good behavior? *Possible Answer:* you may sometimes fall into the trap of thinking God loves you more when you perform well. But Scripture reminds you that salvation is a gift of grace, not a reward for good works (Ephesians 2:8–9). Obedience becomes a response of love rather than an attempt to earn acceptance.

Prayer Response: Lord, thank You for rescuing me by Your grace. Help me remember that my relationship with You begins with Your love, not my performance. Teach me to obey You out of gratitude and trust, in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Tuesday — No Other Gods

Key Verse: “You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3)

Reflection: The first commandment reminds you that God alone deserves ultimate devotion. Yet the human heart often looks for security and identity in other things like success, relationships, or approval. These things can quietly become idols when they matter more to you than God. True freedom comes when God is the center of your life.

Application Question: what might you be relying on for security or identity instead of God? *Possible Answer:* you might notice that you depend heavily on your career, reputation, retirement or achievements for a sense of worth. When these things become ultimate, they take the place of God in your heart. Turning back to God means trusting Him as your true source of identity/security.

Prayer Response: Father, reveal any idols that have taken Your place in my heart. Help me trust You above everything else and find my identity in You alone, in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Wednesday — The Law Reveals the Heart

Key Verse: “Through the law comes knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:20)

Reflection: The Ten Commandments function like a mirror that reveals what is really happening inside your heart. They show you where sin exists, but they also show you what genuine love for God and others looks like. When you see your failures clearly, you begin to recognize how deeply you need God’s grace. The law was never meant to save you; it was meant to point you to the Savior for His transformational work in your heart.

Application Question: how has God’s Word recently revealed something in your heart that needs to change? *Possible Answer:* Perhaps you noticed anger, jealousy, or dishonesty that you previously ignored. God’s Word exposes these areas not to condemn you but to lead you toward repentance and transformation through Christ.

Prayer Response: Lord, search my heart and reveal anything that does not honor You. Give me humility to confess my sin and the courage to pursue change through Your grace, in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Thursday — Jesus Fulfilled the Law

Key Verse: “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.” (Matthew 5:17)

Reflection: No person has ever kept the Ten Commandments perfectly except Jesus. He obeyed the law completely and then offered His life as the sacrifice for sinners who could not. Through faith in Christ, His righteousness becomes your righteousness. Because of Jesus, the law no longer condemns you but guides you into a life that reflects God’s character and love.

Application Question: how does knowing Jesus fulfilled the law change the way you view your failures? *Possible Answer:* Instead of hiding in shame, you can run toward Christ for forgiveness and renewal. Jesus has already paid the price for your sin, so you can walk forward in grace and transformation.

Prayer Response: Jesus, thank You for fulfilling the law perfectly on my behalf. Help me trust in Your finished work and live each day in the freedom of Your grace, in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Friday — A Life Shaped by Love

Key Verse: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37–39)

Reflection: Jesus summarized the entire law in two commands: love God and love others. The Ten Commandments show you what that love looks like in everyday life. As God transforms your heart, your actions begin to reflect His character. Obedience is not about rule-following but about becoming a person who loves like God loves.

Application Question: what is one practical way you can show love for God or someone else today? *Possible Answer:* you might forgive someone who hurt you, speak truth instead of gossip, or set aside time to rest and worship God. Small acts of obedience often reveal a heart that is learning to love.

Prayer Response: Father, shape my heart and my life so that my love for You and others becomes visible in everything I do. Help my obedience reflect the grace You have shown me, in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Sources: J. I. Packer, *Keeping the Ten Commandments, Knowing God*; Alistair Begg, *Words from the Fire: Hearing the Voice of God in the Ten Commandments*; Mark Rooker, *The Ten Commandments: Ethics for the Twenty-First Century*; Robert Morgan, *Living the Ten Commandments*.