

General Church Education



# The Commandments

## The First Table

Exodus 19:16-25; 20:1-11

## Lesson 12

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 3: The Lord Is Our Lawgiver

For ages 8-9 years

# The Commandments—The First Table

Exodus 19:16-25; 20:1-11

## For Parents and Teachers

The children of Israel set up camp around the stern and foreboding rocky face of Mount Sinai. Majestic and awesome events occurred preceding the giving of the Ten Commandments. All of the people heard the commandments spoken by the voice of the Lord from the mountain. These are basic laws shared by most civilizations to bring order to society. They were suited to the state of the people at this time. Later in the New Testament we learn a more internal meaning of the commandments as Jesus spoke to His disciples and the multitudes on the mountains in Galilee. Later still, in the Heavenly Doctrine, we are further instructed about the spiritual sense of the commandments, allowing us to deepen our understanding of these basic laws of heaven and how they can bring our lives into harmony with our Creator.

The Ten Commandments are a covenant between the Lord and people. The first table teaches about loving the Lord our God. The second table teaches about loving the neighbor. They are so important that teaching the Ten Commandments is one of three things that parents promise in the New Church baptism ceremony. It is vital to acknowledge the Divine source of these laws. It is not only wrong or criminal in civil life to break these Commandments, but it also hurts our souls and endangers our eternal welfare. The Ten Commandments were given to put us in a receptive state to receive the Lord's love and wisdom.

## Ideas for Children

- The Ten Commandments are divine laws—not just man-made laws.
- The Ten Commandments are just as important for us as they were for the Israelites.
- The Ten Commandments teach us the way to heaven.

## From the Writings

“You shall have no other Gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3) These are the words of the first commandment. Their ordinary meaning in the natural or literal sense is that idols are not to be worshipped. In the natural or literal sense this commandment also means that no one is to be loved above all except God, nor anything except what comes from God. This too agrees with the Lord's words in Matthew 22:37-39 and Luke 10:25-28. Anyone or anything which is loved above all is, to the lover, God and divine. For instance, if we love ourselves or the world above all else, then we or the world are our own god. This is why such people do not in their hearts acknowledge any God. They are therefore linked with like minds in hell, where all are gathered who have loved themselves or the world above all. *True Christian Religion* 291 and 293

# The Ten Commandments—The First Table

Exodus 19:16-25; 20:1-11

## Words to Understand

**consecrate**—to set something apart as holy or for worship

**bounds**—any line or thing marking a limit or border

**sanctify**—to make pure or set aside as holy

**descend**—to come or go down

**ascend**—to move upward or rise

**perish**—to die

### The Israelites Come to Mount Sinai

You know that the Israelites were on their journey to the promised land and that the Lord was leading them there. He took them on a special route past a mountain called Mount Sinai.

Have you ever seen a mountain? Mount Sinai was a large bare and rocky mountain. The sight of this mountain must have impressed upon the children of Israel that this was an important place. The Israelites camped all around it. They had traveled about three months from Egypt to get to Mount Sinai, moving slowly with all their herds and possessions. They camped at Mount Sinai for almost a year in order to learn some important things from the Lord.

### The Mount of God

Do you know why the Lord guided the Israelites to Mount Sinai? It was because this mountain had a special, holy purpose. They called it the Mount of God. There the Lord had appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Now the Lord planned to come down upon Mount Sinai and speak to all the Israelites. He wanted to give them His Ten Laws called the Ten Commandments. In today's lesson we will read how it happened and talk about the first three laws that the Lord gave to the children of Israel.

### Moses Goes Up the Mountain

One day Moses went up the mountain to talk to the Lord. The Lord told Moses to tell the Israelites that if they would obey His Commandments, they would always be a special people to the Lord. Did the Israelites agree? When Moses went back down and told the people what the Lord had said, they promised, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do."

### Preparation

The people needed to be prepared to hear the Lord. The Lord told Moses that He would come down on the third day to give His Commandments. The people were told to sanctify themselves. They were to wash themselves and their clothes and they were also to be sorry for the

wrong they had done.

The Lord told them to set boundaries around Mount Sinai. No one, not even an animal, was to go past the boundary marks. The mountain was holy and no one, except those the Lord allowed, were to go up it. Ancient people often made boundary markers using stones, so these markers may have been piles of stones.

If you had been one of the Hebrew children, you would have been busy getting ready for the Lord to come to the mountain. You would have had to wash your clothes. Maybe you would even have helped pile up stones to set the boundary around the mountain. And on the third day you would have experienced the awe- some things that happened when the Lord came to the mountain. **Read Exodus 19:16-25; 20:1-11.**



### The Third Day

What did the people hear on the morning of the third day? What did they see? The thunder and lightning made them tremble as they gathered around the bottom of the mountain. Next they heard the voice of the Lord as He spoke the Ten Commandments to them.

Why do you think the Lord used these awesome signs? He wanted the people to know that these were His laws, not man-made laws. Then the Lord wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone while Moses was on Mount Sinai. They were written in Hebrew because that was the language of the children of Israel and is closest to the language of heaven. Hebrew is written from right to left, or in the opposite direction from English.

Stone is very hard and lasts for a long time. By writing the Ten Commandments on stone the Lord taught people that they are truths of the Word which last forever. They are to be written on each person's memory and used in everyone's lives. There were two tables or tablets of stone. The first table teaches how we are to worship and obey the Lord. The second table teaches us how the Lord wants us to treat other people. In this lesson we read about the first table of stone.

### The First Commandment: "You shall have no other gods before Me."

This means we are to worship only the Lord. We are not to worship idols. An idol is a statue or image of a person or animal. Ancient peoples used to worship images. So how are we to keep this

law today? The first commandment tells us not to love anything more than the Lord. We worship what we love. People love many things. Some love money or possessions. Others love to have their own way instead of obeying the Lord and listening to others. This is a way of “making other gods” and it causes us trouble in many ways. We should love the Lord above all and worship only Him.

**The Second Commandment: “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.”**

Is it hurtful to make fun of someone’s name? The Lord’s name is holy and should be very special to all who love Him. This commandment means we are never to use any of the Lord’s names in a bad or silly way. We are never to swear using His name or make jokes of His name or His Word. One of the Lord’s names is “The Word” and so we treat His Word with care, putting it in a special place and reading it with reverence.

**The Third Commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”**

This means to worship the Lord, especially on the Sabbath or Sunday. Sunday is a special day set aside for reading the Word and worshipping. It is to be a day of rest, a time to do nice things for others and to have a good time. The Lord knows we need a special day to remember Him and to thank Him for all He does for us. He also knows we need a day of rest from our regular work. This is why He gave this commandment.

**The First Table**

These first three commandments on the first table of stone teach us to love the Lord more than anything else. They teach us to worship only Him, to use His name and His Word in a careful, holy way and to honor the Lord’s Sabbath by remembering the Lord and our neighbor. If we learn to love and obey these commandments, we will feel the Lord near us and He will be with us always.



**Discussion Ideas**

- Boundaries keep our lives safe and protect what is important. Why is this important?
- How can we prepare for worship as the Israelites prepared? How is this beneficial?
- What “images” or “other gods” might we be tempted to “worship”?

# Activity Overview | The Commandments—The First Table

## Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Honor your father and your mother.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.

You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.” Exodus 20:1-17 (parts)

## Songs

*Ten Commandments Song*

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-the-ten-commandments/>

*All That the Lord Has Spoken*

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-all-that-the-lord-has-spoken-2/>

## Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Activity 1 | Ten Commandments—True or False?
- Activity 2 | The Ten Commandments in Our Hearts
- Picture to color—Moses Ascends Mount Sinai (Exodus 19)
- Ten Commandments in Hebrew to trace and Decorate

## Additional Activity Ideas

- Listen to the *Ten Commandments Song* at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-the-ten-commandments/>
- Hear the Ten Commandments spoken in Hebrew at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-the-ten-commandments-in-hebrew/>
- Spiritual laws guide us to heaven and natural laws guide us on earth. How do laws help us? What would it be like if there were no laws?
- Why is it important for us to know that the Commandments are God’s laws, not man-made laws? What difference does this make?

## Activity 1 | The Ten Commandments | True or False?

Read each sentence. Put “T” for True or “F” for False on the line by each sentence.

- \_\_\_ 1. The Children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sinai.
- \_\_\_ 2. The Israelites camped before Mount Sinai.
- \_\_\_ 3. The Lord said that if the Israelites obeyed His voice they would be special people to Him.
- \_\_\_ 4. The people said that they would not obey the Lord.
- \_\_\_ 5. Moses was to sanctify the people.
- \_\_\_ 6. No bounds were set around Mount Sinai.
- \_\_\_ 7. The people washed their clothes.
- \_\_\_ 8. On the third day there was thunder, lightning and a thick cloud on the mountain.
- \_\_\_ 9. The sound of the trumpet got softer and softer.
- \_\_\_ 10. The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai.

Answers:  
1. T  
2. T  
3. T  
4. F  
5. T  
6. F  
7. T  
8. T  
9. F  
10. T

## Activity 2 | The Ten Commandments in Our Hearts

Make a heart with a doorway that opens to show the Ten Commandments inside. Having truth in one's heart is not just knowing the truth or even obeying the truth, but also loving it and doing it.

### Materials Needed

- 2 pieces of red construction paper
- small copy of Ten Commandments (see below for abbreviated form)
- scissors
- glue

### Directions

1. Trace or copy the heart (see *Heart Template* on next page) onto two pieces of red paper.
2. On the first page, cut around the heart, and cut out the window along the dashed line.
3. On the second page cut out the heart, but *do not cut out the window*.
4. Cut out the Ten Commandments (below) and glue them onto the second page within the dashed line, so that they can be seen through the window when the two hearts are put together.
5. Glue the two hearts together, applying glue around the edges of the hearts.
6. Glue the text slip with the Psalm 15 quote onto the front or back of the heart.

**Optional:** Decorate the outside of the heart with stickers, glitter, *etc.*

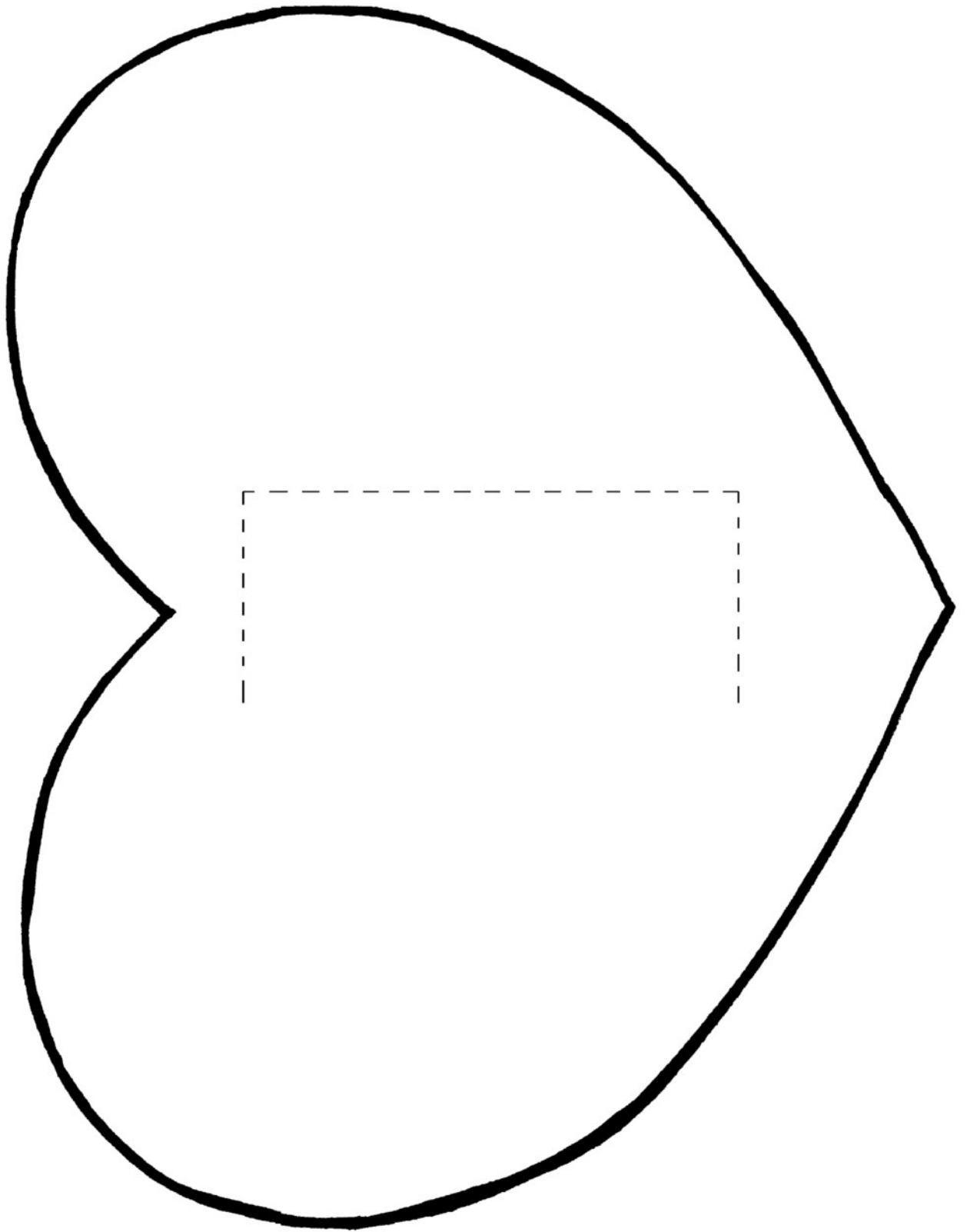
### The Ten Commandments

You shall have no other Gods before Me.  
You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.  
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.  
Honor your father and your mother.  
You shall not murder.  
You shall not commit adultery.  
You shall not steal.  
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.  
You shall not covet your neighbor's house.  
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle?  
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?  
Those who walk uprightly, and work righteousness,  
and speak the truth in their hearts....

Psalm 15:1-2







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