BibleProject

The 10 Commandments

Group Study | 10 Sessions

Scripture is filled with ancient stories about God giving people instructive words, or commands. Are they still relevant today? And are they just divine rules and regulations, or is there more to the story?

In Exodus 20, we encounter Israel's famous "10 Commandments." The Hebrew text calls them the "10 words" (*'aseret haddevarim*) of God (Exod. 34:28; Deut. 4:13, 10:4), inviting us to hear not mere orders but meaningful speech. These are words meant to shape people into a community that trusts God, lives justly, and loves both God and neighbor.

In this group study, we will explore these words together by reading Scripture closely, asking questions, and sharing insights. We'll discover the deeper wisdom in each command and see how they set people free to flourish according to God's design.

How to Use This Study

We recommend printing this PDF for each participant to use for reference and note-taking.

The study consists of ten 45-minute sessions. Each follows the same basic structure.

- **Step 1: Consider a key question.** This question will guide the session, so have it in mind as you work through each step. By the end, you will be more equipped to respond to the question.
- **Step 2: Read Scripture together.** The passages will relate to the key question. It's okay if you don't see the connections right away; the goal is to make space for reflection and curiosity. Record your initial questions about the Scripture so your group can come back to them later.

- **Step 3: Collect insights about the Scripture readings.** These insights come from The 10 Commandments animated video series and the BibleProject Scholarship team. They include historical and narrative context, word definitions, literary design observations, and hyperlink summaries.
- **Step 4: Reread Scripture.** After engaging with the insights, you'll hopefully see the Scriptures from new perspectives and notice more connections.
- **Step 5: Discuss as a group.** Wrap up with a conversation about the passages and insights, guided by the discussion questions at the end of each session.

Sessions

1. 1st Commandment: No Other Gods
2. 2nd Commandment: No Idols
3. 3rd Commandment: Do Not Carry the Name in Vain
4. 4th Commandment: Remember the Sabbath
5. 5th Commandment: Honor Your Father and Mother
6. 6th Commandment: Do Not Kill
7. 7th Commandment: Do Not Commit Adultery
8. 8th Commandment: Do Not Steal
9. 9th Commandment: Do Not Bear False Witness
10. 10th Commandment: Do Not Desire Your Neighbor's Possessions

SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

We'd love to hear how you found this resource helpful or how you think it could be improved. Please email us at **info@bibleproject.com**.

SESSION 1

1st Commandment: No Other Gods

Step 1: Key Question

How does a restriction to serve only God help to set people free?

Step 2: Read Scripture

In this session, we're going to read the introduction to the 10 Commandments and the first command, as well as a passage that explains why God gave them.

- Exodus 19:4-6
- Exodus 20:1-3
- Deuteronomy 6:1-3, 24-25

Ask Questions

Let's make space for questions about Scripture. We want to discover what catches our interest, so we'll leave the questions unanswered for now but come back to them later. The point is not to *answer* the questions here but to give space for curiosity.

Step 3: Collect Insights

Next, let's explore insights and related Bible context.

Video

- 1st Commandment: No Other Gods

Story Context: Recently Escaped Slaves

- Picture a people who have known only slavery, now standing free at Mount Sinai. These are the people who receive the 10 Commandments, and their story helps us better understand the commandments' wisdom. For more than four hundred years, the Israelites had lived in an Egyptian world of idols and gods who demanded appeasement, as well as under harsh slave masters who forced submission. They were survivors driven by fear.
- But God says, "I ... brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Exod. 20:2). God *first* rescues them out of bondage and forms a relationship of trust. Then he gives instructions. While Egypt's rulers forced allegiance, Israel's God invites a free choice.

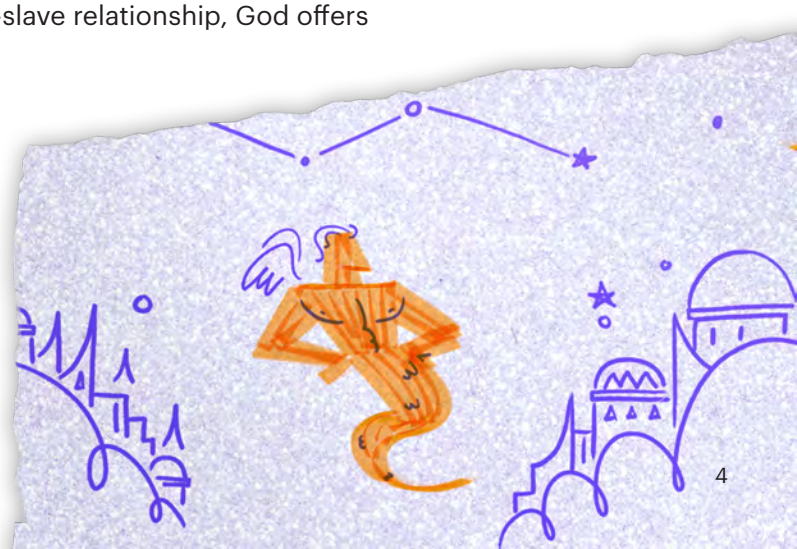
- For newly freed slaves, just being given a choice was restorative. God's invitation to serve him alone expressed divine love and welcomed reconnection with God's true design for life.
- When a branch is cut from a vine, the branch shrivels and dies, not because the branch failed to appease the vine or because the vine is angry, but because it's been severed from the source of life. At Sinai, God's words boom from a fiery thundercloud, and the already terrified people react with more fear. But God reminds them that, unlike any ruler they've known, he has been gentle and good, the rescuer who never enslaves.
- The bigger biblical story shows that God is not limiting Israel's (or anyone's) freedom but restoring and protecting it. When people choose to trust him, they are freed from systems of fear and united with the life-giver.

Hyperlink Summary: "I Am *Your* God"

- What does it mean when God tells Israel he is *their* God? This isn't the first or last time God says this, and seeing hyperlinks to the way God describes his relationship with Israel reveals God's intent to love.
- "I am the LORD" (Hebrew: Yahweh), God says, and I am "*your* God" (Hebrew: Elohim), he adds (Exod. 20:2, emphasis added). Egypt's Pharaoh or another commanding ruler might proclaim: "I am God to you; do as I say," but the 10 Commandments start differently. God opens not with a demand but a commitment to give himself to his people.
- Elsewhere in Scripture, when God gives himself to another, it's a declaration of love. Long before Sinai, God spoke self-giving love to Abraham and his family. He promised to be their God—not to control but to bless them (see Gen. 17:7, 26:24, 28:13). The prophets describe this covenant partnership as similar to a marriage (see Jer. 31:32; Isa. 54:4-8). God's words, or commands, aim to build a relationship with him that enlivens and sets people free (Jer. 7:23).
- These links show that God never stops loving and caring for people, giving them reason to trust him. Unlike a master-slave relationship, God offers himself and the choice to follow his lead.

Step 4: Reread Scripture

- Exodus 19:4-6
- Exodus 20:1-3
- Deuteronomy 6:1-3, 24-25



Step 5: Discuss as a Group

- What did you notice? What strikes you as interesting or curious?
- How do these passages shape your understanding of God's commands?
- Try flipping the command over, reading it less as a prohibition against doing the wrong thing and more as an opportunity to choose what's right. If you were to "flip over" the first command, what would it be? What is God inviting us to do or value?
- What wisdom is this passage inviting you to consider?
- After this study, what questions do you still have?

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Videos

The 10 Commandments as Wisdom

The Exodus Way

Elohim

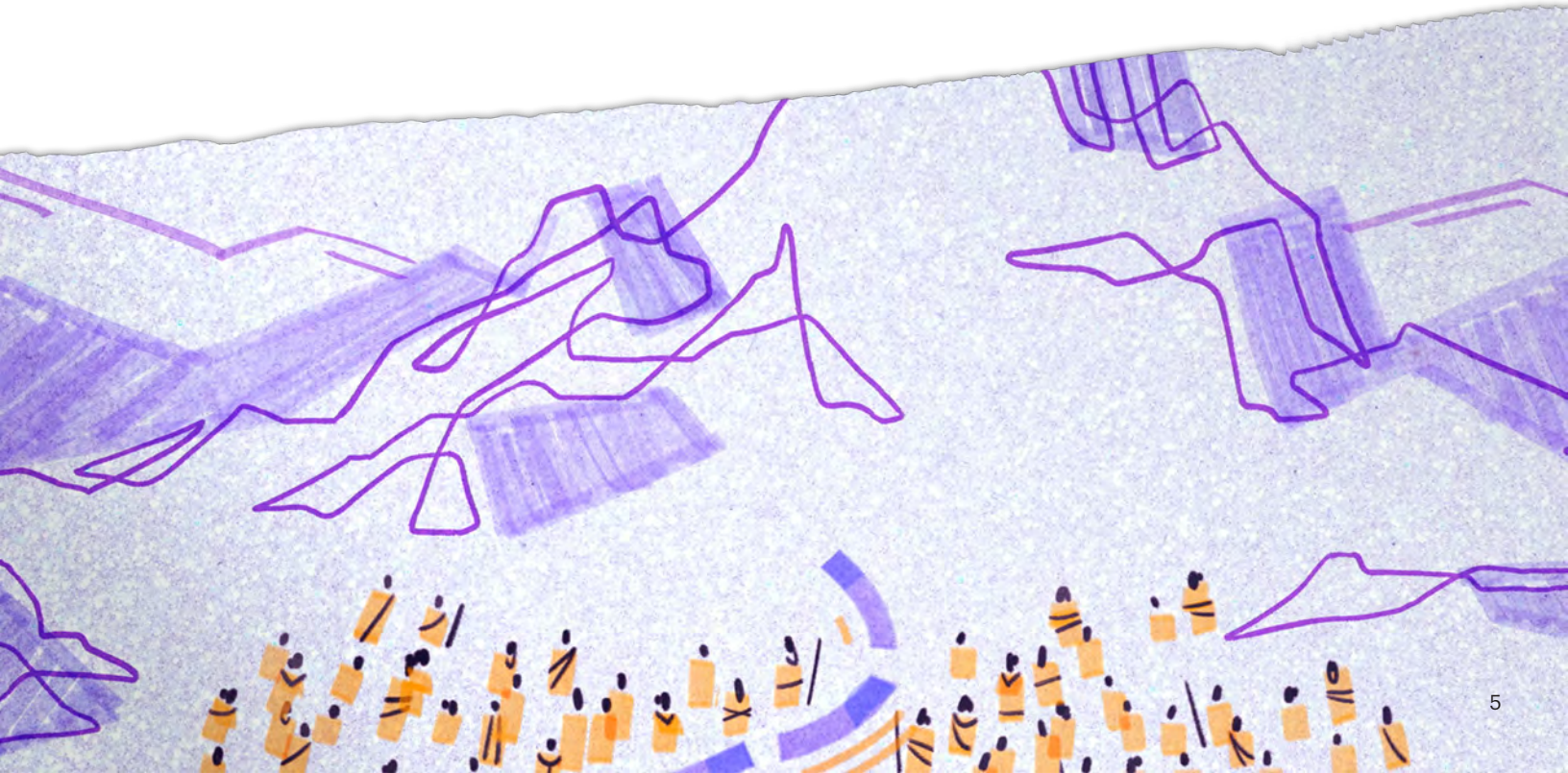
Biblical Law

Podcasts

God's First Commands in the Bible

Commands for Life Given to Noah and Abraham

1st Commandment: No Other Gods



SESSION 2

2nd Commandment: No Idols

Step 1: Key Question

Why does God forbid people from creating images of himself?

Step 2: Read Scripture

In this session, we're going to read the second command of the 10 Commandments and two related Bible passages.

- Genesis 1:26-27
- Exodus 20:4-6
- Deuteronomy 4:15-20

Ask Questions

Let's make space for questions about Scripture. We want to discover what catches our interest, so we'll leave the questions unanswered for now but come back to them later. The point is not to *answer* the questions here but to give space for curiosity.

Step 3: Collect Insights

Next, let's explore insights and related Bible context.

Video

- 2nd Commandment: No Idols

Word Definition: *Pesel* and *Temunah*

- To describe idols and the gods they represent, the second command (Exod. 20:4-6) uses two words: *pesel*, which means "crafted thing," and *temunah*, which means a visual "representation" or "form." God says they should not craft visual representations of created things, other gods, or even God himself in order to worship or serve them.
- In the ancient world, gaining divine favor or protection often began with making a statue (*pesel*) in the form (*temunah*) of a god. The idol provided personal, localized access to the deity, and people sought to avoid the gods' anger through sacrifices and rituals driven by fear.

- In contrast, the God of Israel wants relationship, not appeasement. Yahweh gives his love and favor freely, so the command prevents more than idol making—it breaks them free from a system of fear. Moses reminds Israel that God did not appear on Sinai in visual form (*temunah*) but addressed them by voice (Deut. 4:12, 15). God is not like other gods and cannot be contained in any human-crafted image.

Hyperlink Summary: Connecting Image and Idol

- Throughout Scripture, idolatry is often contrasted with humanity's calling to represent God as his image. Recall that God's first "image" is his own creation; God created humanity in "his own image" (Gen. 1:27). From the beginning, he intended to partner with people to bless creation (Gen. 1:26-28). People are made to image God—to be *like* God.
- Moses reflects this idea when describing Israel as a molten idol pulled from a furnace: God "brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt" to become God's own people (Deut. 4:20 NASB), shaped by God into living images who represent him on Earth.
- When idolatry distorts that image, people bow to creation itself or created images rather than to God as creator. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul says such distortion twists the mind and causes people to exchange "the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible mankind, of birds, four-footed animals, and crawling creatures" (Rom. 1:23 NASB).
- When Paul calls Jesus "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), he's linking all the way back to original creation, suggesting Jesus as the human who completely images God.
- Paul is saying we are created to live like Jesus, and living like Jesus requires a fundamental change. Paul describes it as putting on "the new self" and "being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator" (Col. 3:10 NRSV). These and other idol-image connections in Scripture suggest that God forbids the creation of divine images because he has created all humankind in his image.

Step 4: Reread Scripture

- Genesis 1:26-27
- Exodus 20:4-6
- Deuteronomy 4:15-20

Step 5: Discuss as a Group

- What did you notice? What strikes you as interesting or curious?
- How do these passages shape your understanding of God's commands?
- Try flipping the command over, reading it less as a prohibition against doing the wrong thing and more as an opportunity to choose what's right. If you were to "flip over" the second command, what would it be? What is God inviting us to do or value?
- How does this command affect our relationship to wealth, security, or pleasure?
- What wisdom is this passage inviting you to consider?
- After this study, what questions do you still have?

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Videos

Image of God

Paul's Missionary Journeys: Acts 13-20

Podcasts

2nd Commandment: No Idols

Image of God Podcast Series

SESSION 3

3rd Commandment: Do Not Carry the Name in Vain

Step 1: Key Question

What does it mean to “take” or “carry” God’s name?

Step 2: Read Scripture

In this session, we’re going to read the third command of the 10 Commandments and two other passages that help us live by its wisdom.

- Exodus 20:7
- Psalm 23:1-3
- Colossians 3:12-17

Ask Questions

Let’s make space for questions about Scripture. We want to discover what catches our interest, so we’ll leave the questions unanswered for now but come back to them later. The point is not to *answer* the questions here but to give space for curiosity.

Step 3: Collect Insights

Next, let’s explore insights and related Bible context.

Video

- 3rd Commandment: Do Not Carry the Name in Vain

Word Definition: *Shem*

- *Shem* is the Hebrew word for “name,” but it can also refer to someone’s character or reputation. If you “give someone a bad name,” you do or say something that tarnishes the person’s reputation or causes people to lose respect for them. Proverbs says that a good *shem*, or reputation, is better than being rich (Prov. 22:1).

Historical Context: Dedicated to the Deity

- In the ancient world, if you wanted to tag something as belonging to a god, you put the god's name on it. To dedicate a temple, you would inscribe the god's name on its stone. Even people who served in the temple could be branded or tattooed, making them bearers of that deity's name. Anything or anyone carrying a god's name was seen as wholly dedicated to that god, meaning their words and actions either strengthened or diminished their god's reputation.
- The third command implies that God chose Israel to carry his name. It doesn't mean everyone got a "Yahweh" tattoo but that everyone bears his name as God's rescued people. Yahweh and his people are inseparably connected, so the people's words and actions will either strengthen or diminish his reputation. He wants them to carry his name well, not in vain.

Hyperlink Summary: Carrying the Name

- When you trace the ways that Scripture describes people relating to God's name, a pattern emerges. Carrying his name in vain is about much more than using God's name flippantly or as an expression of surprise.
- For the biblical authors, how we treat our neighbors is the way we carry God's name. When the psalmist says, "[Yahweh] guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name" (Ps. 23:3 NASB), we might ask, "What does my righteous path have to do with God's reputation?" The psalmist recognizes that others learn about God through God's people. If the psalmist—who carries God's name—is unloving or cruel, others can't help seeing God as unloving or cruel.
- Paul's letter to the Colossian church echoes the connection between God's name and right relationships with neighbors. For the New Testament authors, doing "everything in the name of the Lord Jesus" looks like showing "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience" (Col. 3:12, 17). So bearing the name of Jesus means living like him and forgiving those who have harmed us just as he has forgiven us (Col. 3:13). To do the opposite is to ignore the third command.
- This command does not come from an insecure God who wants to curate a good image for social "likes." It comes from the loving God who knows that connection with him brings people into the life and freedom he intends for everyone. God does not prevent people from carrying his name; he's saying they already do. The choice then becomes whether we will carry God's name in a flippant and harmful way, or carry it well so that others can meet the one true God.

Step 4: Reread Scripture

- Exodus 20:7
- Psalm 23:1-3
- Colossians 3:12-17

Step 5: Discuss as a Group

- What did you notice? What is striking you as interesting or curious?
- How are these passages shaping your understanding of God's commands?
- Try flipping the command over, reading it less as a prohibition against doing the wrong thing and more as an opportunity to choose what's right. If you were to "flip over" the third command, what would it be? What is God inviting us to do or value?
- Is there any wisdom that this passage is inviting you to consider?
- After this study, what questions do you still have?

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Video

YHWH / LORD

Podcasts

3rd Commandment: Do Not Carry the Name in Vain

Taking God's Name in Vain?

What Does "Hallowed Be Thy Name" Mean? (The Lord's Prayer Pt. 2)

What Is God's Name? Feat. Dr. Michael Heiser

SESSION 4

4th Commandment: Remember the Sabbath

Step 1: Key Question

If work is God's good gift for people, why does God tell them to stop working once a week?

Step 2: Read Scripture

In this session, we're going to read two different versions of the fourth command of the 10 Commandments and another key passage related to it.

- Genesis 2:1-3
- Exodus 20:8-11
- Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Ask Questions

Let's make space for questions about Scripture. We want to discover what catches our interest, so we'll leave the questions unanswered for now but come back to them later. The point is not to *answer* the questions here but to give space for curiosity.

Step 3: Collect Insights

Next, let's explore insights and related Bible context.

Video

- 4th Commandment: Remember the Sabbath

Word Definition: *Shabbat* and *Qadash*

- *Shabbat*, or "Sabbath," means to stop or cease from labor. The command says Israel should remember "the day of stopping," a reference to God's own "day of stopping" on the seventh day of creation (Gen. 2:2-3).
- In Hebrew, the command says Israel is to *qadash* this restful day, to "make it holy" or "set it apart for a special purpose."
- We see this word used elsewhere, including about the items for worship in the tabernacle, which were "set apart" (*qadash*) for special service to God

(Exod. 40:9-11). So when God commands Israel to *qadash* the *Shabbat*, he wants them to treat this day differently than the rest of the week. It's about rhythmically stopping work to recalibrate and remember that work may earn you money, but stopping will make your life rich.

Literary Design: Becoming Complete

- "The day of stopping" is intended for *everyone*, not only for those who can afford it and not only for people. Whether it's the boss or employee, an established Israelite or new immigrant, or even the ox that pulls the plow—everybody gets to rest *together*.
- Notice how the command to "keep the Sabbath" is followed by who gets to rest: "you, your son, your daughter, your male-slave, your female-slave, your cattle, and your immigrant who is in your gates" (Exod. 20:10 BibleProject Translation). While the list is not exhaustive, note how the categories amount to seven groups.

- In the Bible, the number seven conveys completeness. God created the world in seven days, and seven times saw that his completed work "was good" (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). Consider how the seven groups listed in the Sabbath command span both young and old, slave and free, men and women, Israelite and immigrant, animals and all creation—*everything God has made* receives God's rest, following God's seventh-day example.

Hyperlink Summary: Endless Rest

- Why does a limitless God need to rest after six days of creation work? As humans, we spend roughly one third of our life sleeping just to stay energized, and we know we need more rest than that. But if God doesn't get tired (see Ps. 121:4; Isa. 40:28), then what's the connection between our rest and God's rest?

- Genesis 2:1-3 implies that God's seventh-day rest, or stopping, is also the ultimate *goal* of all creation. Biblical authors describe the cosmos as God's palace, or temple, where God lives and reigns (Isa. 66:1), and the seventh day is when God moves in. When kings returned home after defeating enemies, they would "rest" on their throne, having established peaceful rule. God's final goal in creation is to unite with humanity in ruling over and caring for creation.

- In Genesis, descriptions of the first six days of creation include the concluding phrase "there was evening and morning" (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), but the seventh day mentions neither (Gen. 2:2-3). The first six days come to an end, but the seventh day does not, as if God intends for his restful way of ruling to last forever.

- Skip to the end, and you'll see within John's final revelation a hyperlink to this original design. In Revelation 22, John envisions the garden of Eden's tree of life and flowing river. He sees God's finished creation and says "there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illuminate them; and they will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 22:5 NASB).

Step 4: Reread Scripture

- Genesis 2:1-3
- Exodus 20:8-11
- Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Step 5: Discuss as a Group

- What did you notice? What is striking you as interesting or curious?
- How are these passages shaping your understanding of God's commands?
- Try flipping the command over, reading it less as a prohibition against doing the wrong thing and more as an opportunity to choose what's right. If you were to "flip over" the fourth command, what would it be? What is God inviting us to do or value?
- Is there any wisdom that this passage is inviting you to consider?
- After this study, what questions do you still have?

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Videos

Sabbath

Genesis 1

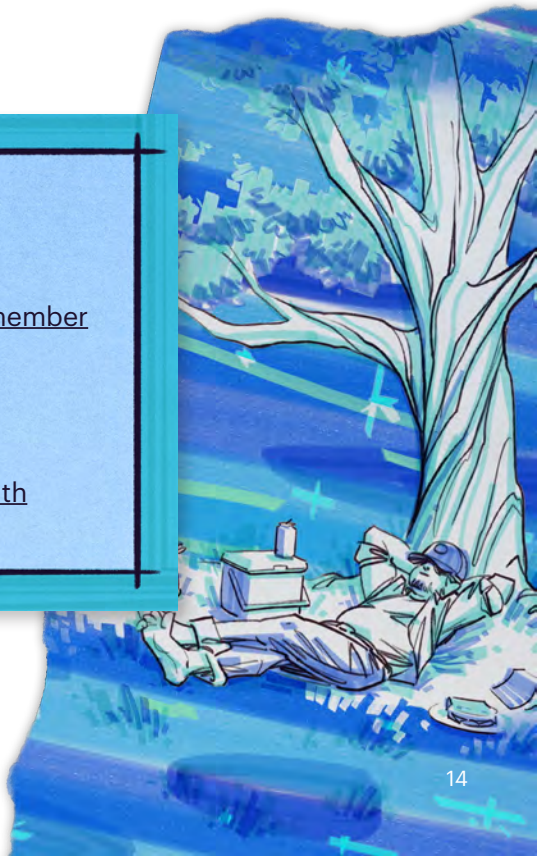
Vocab Insight: *Zakar* / Remember

Podcasts

4th Commandment: Remember the Sabbath

Why Is the Sabbath So Important?

Seventh Day Rest: Sabbath Podcast Series



SESSION 5

5th Commandment: Honor Your Father and Mother

Step 1: Key Question

What does “Honor your father and mother” mean, and what does it not mean?

Step 2: Read Scripture

In this session, we’re going to read the fifth command of the 10 Commandments with other Scriptures that help determine what it’s saying, and what it’s not saying.

- Exodus 20:12
- Matthew 12:46-50
- Luke 14:26
- 1 Timothy 5:1-2, 8

Ask Questions

Let’s make space for questions about Scripture. We want to discover what catches our interest, so we’ll leave the questions unanswered for now but come back to them later. The point is not to *answer* the questions here but to give space for curiosity.

Step 3: Collect Insights

Next, let’s explore insights and related Bible context.

Video

- 5th Commandment: Honor Your Father and Mother

Word Definition: *Kabbed*

- English translations use “honor” for the Hebrew verb *kabbed*, which means “to treat as heavy or weighty.” To honor parents—both mother and father—is to heavily value them and regard their dignity and well-being as important, weighty matters. Read hastily, the command can sound like a rule for kids that basically means “do whatever your parents say,” but that misses the point. This command (and the whole list of commands) is for everyone in Israel: young *and* old. God is teaching all people to value and

respect elder community members while also caring for their needs as they age—treating their very lives as weighty and important.

Story Context: From Survival to Mutual Care

- Egyptian taskmasters had for centuries treated Israelites as nameless commodities, valuable for labor and little more. Slavery forms people to value those who work hardest—survival of the fittest—and the oldest members tend to produce the least.
- God rescued Israel from Egypt, but the slave mindset didn't magically evaporate. God was calling his people to a totally different value system, where flourishing life together matters more than projects or production quotas and where caring for people is most important.
- What does this look like today? Maybe it means reducing your own efficiency to carry another's load. Maybe it's listening to your grandmother tell the same story for the fifth time. Or maybe it's asking advice from someone who's experienced a lot more life than you.
- Egyptian slave culture valued the lives of the fittest, best contributors. But God's story values all human life, period, including elders whose lives he sees as weighty and important.

Hyperlink Summary: Expanding the Fifth Command

- How can God command people to honor their parents (Exod. 20:12) but later, through Jesus, also say people cannot truly follow him unless they "hate" their parents?
- "Whoever comes to me," Jesus says, "and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26 NRSV).
- In fact, Jesus does not contradict the fifth command but expands it. The translation of "hate" trips us up because it sounds like Jesus wants us to treat some, including parents, with contempt. But Jesus is talking about prioritization, not hating people in the sense English conveys. He means you'll have to "treat as less" your loyalty to your parents' expectations if you want to loyally follow God.
- According to Scripture, honoring parents does not mean unqualified allegiance. To "honor parents" is to treat their well-being as weighty and important while giving first allegiance to God alone.

- Jesus demonstrates love for his mother, Mary, by caring for her well-being even as he's dying on a cross (John 19:26-27). But he also expands the boundaries of his family, saying that all who do God's will are now his “brother and sister and mother” (Matt. 12:49-50).
- The New Testament authors build on Jesus's redefinition of family, teaching people to honor community elders like moms and dads (see 1 Tim. 5:1-2). Like Jesus, they prioritize following God while also honoring the fifth command to care for their aging relatives’ dignity and well-being (1 Tim. 5:8).

Step 4: Reread Scripture

- Exodus 20:12
- Matthew 12:46-50
- Luke 14:26
- 1 Timothy 5:1-2, 8

Step 5: Discuss as a Group

- What did you notice? What strikes you as interesting or curious?
- How do these passages shape your understanding of God’s commands?
- Try flipping the command over, reading it less as a prohibition against doing the wrong thing and more as an opportunity to choose what’s right. If you were to “flip over” the fifth command, what would it be? What is God inviting us to do or value?
- What wisdom is this passage inviting you to consider?
- After this study, what questions do you still have?

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Video

Vocab Insight: *Kavod* / Glory

Podcast

5th Commandment: Honor Your Father and Mother

SESSION 6

6th Commandment: Do Not Kill

Step 1: Key Question

What does God's instruction "Do not kill" say about what God values?

Step 2: Read Scripture

In this session, we're going to read the sixth command of the 10 Commandments and two related Bible passages.

- Exodus 1:8-14, 22
- Exodus 20:13
- Matthew 5:21-26

Ask Questions

Let's make space for questions about Scripture. We want to discover what catches our interest, so we'll leave the questions unanswered for now but come back to them later. The point is not to *answer* the questions here but to give space for curiosity.

Step 3: Collect Insights

Next, let's explore insights and related Bible context.

Video

- 6th Commandment: Do Not Kill

Word Definition: *Ratsakh*

- The sixth command is often translated "You shall not murder," but "murder" comes from the Hebrew verb *ratsakh*, which can refer to both accidental killing and premeditated murder (see Num. 35:16-25). Later in the Bible, God provides laws that address complex issues of violence and justice (see Exod. 21-23), but in Exodus 20:13, God establishes a baseline: Protect life. Honor life. Don't take life.

Story Context: Rehumanizing the Enslaved

- Before Sinai, Israel lived in Egypt's brutal empire of violence and forced labor. At the beginning of Exodus, Pharaoh was terrified by Israel's

population growth, and to suppress Israel's numbers, he ordered the drowning of Hebrew baby boys in the Nile (Exod. 1:8-14, 22). Life had no value in itself but was expendable in service to power.

- Raised up in this empire, even Moses participated in this culture of death when he impulsively murdered an abusive Egyptian taskmaster (Exod. 2:11-12). Israel had spent more than four hundred years in a dehumanizing world that said life is cheap.
- So the "Do not kill" command does more than prevent violence. It declares life as sacred, valuable, and worth protecting. God is restoring a vision for the sacredness of human life—a society where all stand as mutuals before God, equally and infinitely prized. No pharaohs. No status systems. No disposable people.
- As God's own creation, humans are not resources but living miracles designed by God, making killing an affront to God himself. Life belongs to God alone, and every person bears his image (Gen. 1:27).

Hyperlink Summary: The Heart of Murder

- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus's words link directly to the sixth command and expose its deeper wisdom. He tells listeners that they have already learned God's command to "not murder" and adds that things like name-calling actually violate the same command (Matt. 5:21-22).
- Murder and name-calling are the same? Not at all. But both come from the same heart attitude. Notice how the larger unit of thought in Matthew 5:21-26 develops the baseline of pursuing just and genuinely peaceful relationships. Diminishing others or harboring contempt for them is a way of rejecting the sixth command's deeper wisdom.
- See how Jesus's words flip the sixth command, giving a positive vision of what it looks like to follow it. Rather than living in hostility or harboring contempt toward others, instead we should "be reconciled" and "come to good terms" with them (Matt. 5:23-25 NASB).
- We may be tempted to skip past the command, confidently saying, "I would *never* kill anyone!" That's good, no doubt, but Jesus makes it impossible to bypass too quickly. He's inviting us to honestly assess our heart attitudes toward others, and he's moving us not only never to kill people but never to even think about others with contempt or as inferiors. For Jesus, the sixth command is about laying down arms and about being reconciled to one another in God's love.

Step 4: Reread Scripture

- Exodus 1:8-14, 22
- Exodus 20:13
- Matthew 5:21-26

Step 5: Discuss as a Group

- What did you notice? What is striking you as interesting or curious?
- How are these passages shaping your understanding of God's commands?
- Try flipping the command over, reading it less as a prohibition against doing the wrong thing and more as an opportunity to choose what's right. If you were to "flip over" the sixth command, what would it be? What is God inviting us to do or value? What are practical ways we can seek to value life?
- What wisdom is this passage inviting you to consider?
- After this study, what questions do you still have?

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Videos

Vocab Insight: *Dām* / Blood

Wisdom Within Laws About Murder, Adultery, and Divorce

Matthew 5:21-22: Murder and Contempt

Podcasts

6th Commandment: Do Not Kill

How Is Anger the Same as Murder?

SESSION 7

7th Commandment: Do Not Commit Adultery

Step 1: Key Question

Is the command against adultery about personal sexual ethics or something more?

Step 2: Read Scripture

In this session, we're going to read the seventh command of the 10 Commandments and several other passages that describe God's intent for marriage.

- Genesis 2:22-24
- Exodus 20:14
- Proverbs 6:27-29, 7:21-23
- Matthew 5:27-30, 15:19, 19:6

Ask Questions

Let's make space for questions about Scripture. We want to discover what catches our interest, so we'll leave the questions unanswered for now but come back to them later. The point is not to *answer* the questions here but to give space for curiosity.

Step 3: Collect Insights

Next, let's explore insights and related Bible context.

Video

- 7th Commandment: Do Not Commit Adultery

Word Definition: *Na'aph*

- Although the Bible speaks of other types of sexual sin, the Hebrew term *na'aph* refers specifically to the violation of the marriage unit. The laws in Leviticus specify that the penalty for an adulterous pair is the same as the penalty for a murderer—capital punishment (Lev. 20:10)—suggesting that taking a life and tearing apart a marriage both destroy something sacred, life itself.

Story Context: Restoring Sacred Intimacy

- In Egypt's empire, power often dictated sexual relationships. For Egyptians with status, marriage was valuable and protected with clear regulation, but for slaves, the sacredness of marriage as a covenant between two people had been diminished. Desire, status, and control could easily override commitment. And in slave systems especially, boundaries were fragile and routinely violated. When everything is shaped by power, intimacy gets distorted.
- So when God prohibits adultery, it isn't a control move or a random rule—it's protection and restoration. It draws a boundary around marriage, shielding it from the kinds of exploitation common in the ancient world.
- In the biblical vision, intimacy is never just physical. It's relational, emotional, even spiritual. It binds lives together. Genesis 2:24 states that the two shall "become one flesh." This is design language. Marriage isn't merely a contract we can revise or exit without cost. It's more like fusion.
- Adultery isn't just breaking a rule. It tears at a covenant bond and fractures what is meant to ground couples and loving communities. The command against it aims to restore marriage's sacredness after centuries of distortion under slavery.

Hyperlink Summary: Creating Unbreakable Bonds

- According to Genesis 2:24, marriage joins man and woman as “one flesh,” and Jesus later anchors his marriage teaching in that original design, describing it as something “God has joined together” (Matt. 19:6). The Bible repeatedly builds on the Genesis foundation, expanding it to show marriage as formative for both individuals and societies.
- The seventh command (Exod. 20:14) protects that design by prohibiting adultery, while the tenth command guards it further by prohibiting desire for a neighbor’s wife (Exod. 20:17). Israel’s wisdom literature intensifies the warning, saying the adulterer comes to ruin, like an ox led to slaughter (Prov. 7:21-23; also 6:27-29). The blunt conclusion: Whoever “commits adultery has no sense” and “destroys” themselves (Prov. 6:32 NRSV).
- Leviticus 20:10 underscores the severity, where adultery carries the same penalty as murder. While no adultery narrative in Scripture actually ends in execution, the law’s severity invites meditation on the connection between marriage and flourishing life.
- The prophets widen the frame even further. They envision marriage in terms of a mutual covenant (Mal. 2:14) and compare it to Israel’s exclusive, loyal relationship with God (Isa. 54:4-8). The point: Real love is loyal. God’s incorruptible love can be the model for our human faithfulness.
- Jesus brings the command to its core: adultery begins not in the bed but with desire (Matt. 5:27-28, 15:19). Regarding another person as an object of consumption is already crossing the line.
- With these links (and more), Scripture shows that adultery doesn’t just break a rule; it tears apart a life-giving union that God formed so that humanity could reflect his own unbreakable love (Matt. 19:3-9).

Step 4: Reread Scripture

- Genesis 2:22-24
- Exodus 20:14
- Proverbs 6:27-29, 7:21-23
- Matthew 5:27-30, 15:19, 19:6

Step 5: Discuss as a Group

- What did you notice? What strikes you as interesting or curious?
- How do these passages shape your understanding of God's commands?
- Try flipping the command over, reading it less as a prohibition against doing the wrong thing and more as an opportunity to choose what's right. If you were to "flip over" the seventh command, what would it be? What is God inviting us to do or value?
- We all have a role in promoting and protecting flourishing covenant partnerships (whether we are married or not). What are some practical ways we can work for the good of everyone's marriages in our communities?
- What wisdom is this passage inviting you to consider?
- After this study, what questions do you still have?

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Videos

Matthew 5:27-28: Adultery and Lust

Loyal Love

Article

Divorce in the Bible: How Jesus Responded to the Debate

Podcasts

7th Commandment: Do Not Commit Adultery

Jesus' Vision for Sex and Desire

How Jesus Responded to the Divorce Debate

SESSION 8

8th Commandment: Do Not Steal

Step 1: Key Question

Does God's prohibition against stealing do more than protect personal property?

Step 2: Read Scripture

In this session, we're going to read the eighth command of the 10 Commandments and some key passages related to it.

- Exodus 20:15, 22:1-3
- Deuteronomy 6:10-12, 15:7-11
- John 10:10-11
- Ephesians 4:28

Ask Questions

Let's make space for questions about Scripture. We want to discover what catches our interest, so we'll leave the questions unanswered for now but come back to them later. The point is not to *answer* the questions here but to give space for curiosity.

Step 3: Collect Insights

Next, let's explore insights and related Bible context.

Video

- 8th Commandment: Do Not Steal

Historical Context: Private Property and Personal Relationship

- Imagine if you *knew* that everyone in your neighborhood was trustworthy. You could toss your house key, forget your passwords, and live without any fear of being robbed or taken advantage of. God's instructions show concern for people's personal stuff, but they go beyond protecting individual rights to forming the kind of community that's built on trust.

- Theft and personal property law was serious business in ancient cultures. So serious that often the listed penalty for theft was death. For example, the famous Code of Hammurabi requires that anyone caught stealing during a house fire be thrown into the fire (Law 25). However, with the exception of stealing a person to enslave them (Exod. 21:16), the biblical laws focus on restitution as a way of mending the relational divide created by theft. The Code of Hammurabi allows for restitution too, but it requires death for a thief unable to pay the full amount (Law 8). In contrast, the law in Exodus 22:1-3 preserves life by allowing the thief to work as a slave until the debt is repaid.
- Israel's other laws go beyond stealing to helping others take care of what God has given them. So if you happen upon a stray sheep or a lost cloak, God says to take care of them until you can return them to their owner (Deut. 22:1-4).
- When you steal, you begin to shape an untrusting environment and create relational damage. You're harming a whole community. Yahweh cares about possessions, but he cares even more about people showing love through how they handle possessions.

Hyperlink Summary: Becoming Generous

- God's laws about property start with the foundational assumption that everything is God's (see Deut. 6:10-12). When I honor others' stuff, I'm honoring God by trusting that he has reasons for giving people what he's given them. And he has reasons for giving me what he's given me. This is why we can share with others, since we trust that God will continue to provide for our needs (see Ps. 23:1).
- In a later set of instructions, God cautions against stinginess and tells his people to share generously with those in need. God cares deeply about those suffering from poverty, and he holds it against people who have the opportunity to help and choose not to (Deut. 15:7-11).
- Jesus exposes the deeper wisdom of the eighth command by giving the most valuable thing possible, his life. In his Good Shepherd teaching, he contrasts the thief's motivation, destruction, with his motivation, self-sacrificial love, so that his sheep can live abundantly (John 10:10-11).
- The eighth command extends far beyond refraining from theft. Living by its wisdom means practicing generosity, working diligently to have enough to share (Eph. 4:28), and going out of the way to help others steward what God has given them.

Step 4: Reread Scripture

- Exodus 20:15, 22:1-3
- Deuteronomy 6:10-12, 15:7-11
- John 10:10-11
- Ephesians 4:28

Step 5: Discuss as a Group

- What did you notice? What strikes you as interesting or curious?
- How do these passages shape your understanding of God's commands?
- Try flipping the command over, reading it less as a prohibition against doing the wrong thing and more as an opportunity to choose what's right. If you were to "flip over" the eighth command, what would it be? What is God inviting us to do or value?
- If everything belongs to God, then how might we honor God through protecting things that God has given someone else?
- What wisdom is this passage inviting you to consider?
- After this study, what questions do you still have?

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Videos

Generosity

Matthew 6:19-23: True Wealth and Generosity

Podcasts

8th Commandment: Do Not Steal

Jesus as the Ultimate Gift

SESSION 9

9th Commandment: Do Not Bear False Witness

Step 1: Key Question

Is bearing false witness any different from lying in general?

Step 2: Read Scripture

In this session, we're going to read the ninth command of the 10 Commandments and some key passages related to it.

- Exodus 20:16
- Exodus 23:1-3, 6-9
- Proverbs 14:25, 25:18
- 1 Kings 21:5-14

Ask Questions

Let's make space for questions about Scripture. We want to discover what catches our interest, so we'll leave the questions unanswered for now but come back to them later. The point is not to *answer* the questions here but to give space for curiosity.

Step 3: Collect Insights

Next, let's explore insights and related Bible context.

Video

- 9th Commandment: Do Not Bear False Witness

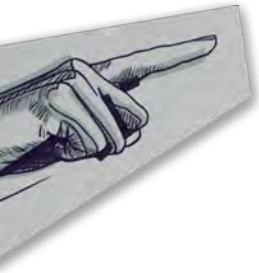
Word Definition: *'Ed Sheqer*

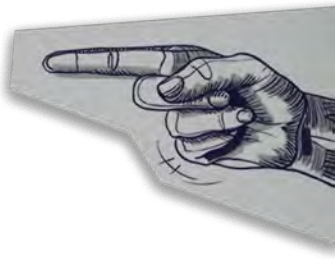
- In the ninth command (Exod. 20:16), the term "false witness [testimony]" comes from the Hebrew words *'ed sheqer*, meaning deceitful testimony about another person. In this context, it does not refer to lying in general but more specifically to a legal or public statement about someone that misrepresents the truth.

- The Bible addresses other forms of deception elsewhere, but the "false witness" prohibited by this command perverts justice and harms innocent people. The corresponding positive action is truthful speech about others—speech that upholds justice and strengthens the foundation for life-giving community.

Hyperlink Summary: Public Truth-Telling

- When you trace Scripture's links to this command, a consistent emphasis on harm emerges, showing that the command is about more than lying. It's about the way deceit damages relationships, corrodes trust, and fractures communities. The many connections to this command show that God cares about truth-telling in public life because whole communities rise or fall on it.





- Like today, witnesses in ancient courts carried enormous power; what they said could secure a neighbor's future or ruin it. In that sense, lying in court is a form of violence. "Like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow," Proverbs says, "is a person who gives false testimony against his neighbor" (Prov. 25:18 NASB), but a "truthful witness" delivers people from death (Prov. 14:25).
- God's law also warns against the pressure of the masses, saying that people should not pervert justice by joining the majority if doing so requires giving a false report about someone (Exod. 23:1-3).

- When lies spread, the powerful often escape consequences while the weak suffer (Exod. 23:6-9). This is what happened to Naboth, who was subjected to a false trial with false witnesses so that he would be executed and Israel's king could seize his family property (see 1 Kgs. 21:5-14).

- Links to "bearing false witness" and the concept of truth-telling in public suggest that following the ninth command is simple but often costly: Tell the truth about others no matter what, even if doing so harms your comfort and social status. Deceitful words have power to destroy, but truthful words have power to build the kind of world God loves—one where justice and trust can grow.

Step 4: Reread Scripture

- Exodus 20:16
- Exodus 23:1-3, 6-9
- Proverbs 14:25, 25:18
- 1 Kings 21:5-14

Step 5: Discuss as a Group

- What did you notice? What strikes you as interesting or curious?
- How do these passages shape your understanding of God's commands?
- Try flipping the command over, reading it less as a prohibition against doing the wrong thing and more as an opportunity to choose what's right. If you were to "flip over" the ninth command, what would it be? What is God inviting us to do or value?
- How can we be a community of people who help create a culture of truth-telling and trust?
- What wisdom is this passage inviting you to consider?
- After this study, what questions do you still have?

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Videos

Justice

Martus / Witness

Podcasts

9th Commandment: Do Not Bear False Witness

Can I Get a Witness?

SESSION 10

10th Commandment: Do Not Desire Your Neighbor's Possessions

Step 1: Key Question

Do our desires always lead us astray?

Step 2: Read Scripture

In this session, we're going to read two versions of the tenth command and examine the Bible's first story about corrupted human desire that proves deadly.

- Genesis 3:1-6
- Exodus 20:17
- Deuteronomy 5:17-21

Ask Questions

Let's make space for questions about Scripture. We want to discover what catches our interest, so we'll leave the questions unanswered for now but come back to them later. The point is not to *answer* the questions here but to give space for curiosity.

Step 3: Collect Insights

Next, let's explore insights and related Bible context.

Video

- 10th Commandment: Do Not Desire Your Neighbor's Possessions

Word Definition: *Khamad*

- The word "covet" comes from the Hebrew word *khamad*, which means "to desire or long for something." *Khamad* is part of being human, a powerful motivation that propels us to action. Unlike the previous nine commands that focus on outward behavior, *khamad* is internal, about something we want. Good desire leads to life, but misplaced desire can drive people into corruption, including murder, deceit, adultery, and theft.

Hyperlink Summary: Life in God's Design

- The final commandment is articulated in Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21, and a small but important difference between them opens a deeper layer of insight.
- In Exodus, the command begins with "You shall not covet" (Hebrew: *khamad*) your neighbor's house and then includes the neighbor's wife and possessions. Deuteronomy flips the order, placing the neighbor's wife first, followed by the house and everything else. That shift may seem minor, but it creates a set of intentional parallels across Deuteronomy 5:17-21.
- Placed side by side, the commands mirror one another: "You shall not murder" (5:17) corresponds to "You shall not bear false witness" (5:20), since both false witness and murder can destroy human life.
- "You shall not commit adultery" (5:18) aligns with "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (5:21a), while "You shall not steal" (5:19) pairs with "[You shall not] desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male slave or his female slave, his ox, his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (5:21b). In other words, the final command doesn't stand alone—it reaches beyond outward action to expose a person's inward motivation. Long before harm shows up in behavior, it takes shape in desire.
- Deuteronomy also adds a second verb: not only "do not desire" (*khamad*), but also "do not crave" (*'avah*). Together these words echo the language of Genesis 3:6, where the tree of knowing good and bad in Eden is described as both "desirable" (*khamad*) and "craveable" (*'avah*). The connection draws a distinction between healthy desire and the kind that distorts judgment and pulls us away from trusting God. Desiring nourishing food was a good, God-given desire, but taking it against God's will was not.
- These two versions of the command show that God's instructions aren't random or disconnected. They're deeply rooted in the story of creation, and they aim to form people who live wisely—from the inside out.

Step 4: Reread Scripture

- Genesis 3:1-6
- Exodus 20:17
- Deuteronomy 5:17-21

Step 5: Discuss as a Group

- What did you notice? What strikes you as interesting or curious?
- How do these passages shape your understanding of God's commands?
- Try flipping the command over, reading it less as a prohibition against doing the wrong thing and more as an opportunity to choose what's right. If you were to "flip over" the tenth command, what would it be? What is God inviting us to do or value?
- How can we train our desires to focus on what God has given us and what God wants for us, such as the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-24?
- Is there any wisdom that this passage is inviting you to consider?
- After this study, what questions do you still have?

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Video

Design Patterns

Podcast

10th Commandment: Do Not Desire Your Neighbor's Possessions