

Week Two: Law
Exodus 20:1-21

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. Here's a fun trivia question: How many of Disney's seven dwarves can you name? On a more important note, how many of the Ten Commandments could you name without looking? Try - and see how many you get.
2. Why would it be important for an individual to know the Ten Commandments?
3. People often talk about the Ten Commandments as the basis for all moral law, but many of us, even Christians, don't know them all that well. For example, turn to Exodus 20:1-17, and count all the commands God gives to the Israelites. How many are there? (Hint: it's not ten.)
4. If you count "thou shalt nots" and imperative-tense verbs, you actually get twelve commandments. But we know from elsewhere in the Bible (Exod. 34:28; Deut. 4:13) that God considered there to be ten, so the question becomes: which of the commands were supposed to be combined to make a total of ten? How would you personally divide these twelve commands into ten?
5. Different Christian denominations divide the commandments in different ways. Our own denomination combines Exodus 20:3-5 into a single commandment and divides Exodus 20:17 into two commandments. But according to all Christian denominations, what verse(s) would contain the first commandment?
6. Christians would all agree that verse 3 (or verses 3-5) contain the first commandment. But God's people at the time, the Israelites, thought that the first commandment was in verse 2! In what ways does that challenge your thinking about these commandments? (Come back tomorrow to reflect more on this point!)
7. Close your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you contemplate His commandments with fresh eyes. And, in the words of Psalm 19, pray that He would help you love His law because "The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward." (Psalm 19:7-11)

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

8. Start by skimming the Ten Commandments section from yesterday, Exodus 20:1-17. Jews consider verse two to be the first commandment. Why does verse two not seem like a match to the rest of the commandments?
9. In the Hebrew language, the actual name for this list is the "ten words," And "word" (dabar) can mean a command or instruction, an event or account, or even a promise. Knowing that "word" can mean multiple things, go through this

section again and mark each sentence as either a command or a promise.

10. What are some of the promises that are peppered throughout the commands?
11. With this nuanced understanding of this section, why might verse two be an important first word for this list?
12. Knowing we, just like all three-year-olds, like to ask, “Why?”, God gives His people the why behind the commandments. What is the reason God gives us to follow His words?
13. While you were probably not personally rescued from slavery in Egypt, from what has God rescued you?
14. Close your FIFTEEN by praying Psalm 19: “The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.” (Psalm 19:7-11)

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

15. It’s been a consistent controversy over the past few decades whether American courthouses can or should have the Ten Commandments memorialized on or near their buildings. What would be a good reason for posting the Ten Commandments at our judicial institutions? What would be a good reason against posting them?
16. Here’s another important question for Christians to ponder: for whom are the Ten Commandments actually intended, believers only or unbelievers, as well? Why?
17. Let’s look again at Exodus 20:1-2. What is the reason God gives for why people should follow these commands?
18. Now think about this question another way. In these commands (verses 2-17), is God being coercive (forcing people to obey) or persuasive (convincing people that it’s a good idea to obey)?
19. While there is a little bit of both, God gives us a clear motivation behind the commandments: We follow them because we are grateful to God for what He has done and trust His vision for our future. How easy or hard is it for you, personally, to trust that God has your greater good in mind?
20. Ultimately, the Ten Commandments represent God’s ideals for his people. In what ways might following these

commandments lead to a healthier life?

21. As you finish your FIFTEEN, continue to reflect on and pray with the words of Psalm 19. “The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.” (Psalm 19:7-11)

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

22. The Catholic monk, Thomas Merton, once said: “We are not at peace with others because we are not at peace with ourselves, and we are not at peace with ourselves because we are not at peace with God.” How true does this ring in your life? How peaceful would you rank your relationship with God?
23. Now read Exodus 20:1-11 and 18-21. How peaceful were the Israelites with God?
24. In v.19 the people are even afraid to communicate with God directly! Do you think this was an appropriate or inappropriate feeling on their part? Why?
25. Regardless of the way people feel, God does want us to be at peace with Him. And He’s given us three ground rules for being in right relationship with Him. Look again at verses 1-11. What are the three ground rules for relationship with God?
26. What are specific ways that you follow each of these three rules?
27. What could you work on doing better or more consistently in any of these three areas?
28. End your FIFTEEN by praying Psalm 19, specifically that God would help you feel this way about His law, so that you could be more at peace with him. “The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.” (Psalm 19:7-11)

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

29. At St. John, we describe our faith walk as a LIFEjourney. You can read about it here: stjstl.net/about/lifejourney-and-11156/. Of the four steps in the journey, which ones are about our relationship with God and which are about our relationships with other people?

30. Notice that each people step follows a God step. Why might this order be important?

31. Read Mark 12:30-31. How did Jesus summarize the Ten Commandments? Which of these do you personally find easier to do?

32. It's a good thing that God has given us guidelines for both of these relationships. And as we look to "Live the SIX" on our LIFEjourney, the last seven commandments serve as a starting point. Read Exodus 20:12-17. Rank the commands in order of difficulty for you. (Keep in mind Jesus' expanded definitions of murder and adultery in Matthew 5:21-32.) Which one is most difficult for you? Why? Which one comes most naturally to you? Why is that?

33. Why do you think God put these in the order He chose? Is there a significance to the order?

34. If there is anyone who you have personally harmed recently by breaking one of these commandments, make a point to reach out and ask forgiveness. It may seem awkward, but that is the way to restore relationship and truly serve your neighbor in love.

35. Finish your final FIFTEEN this week by praying Psalm 19 a final time. Ask God to help you keep His commandments on your heart so that you can truly show love to your neighbor. "The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward." (Psalm 19:7-11)