

The Ten Commandments

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
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Agree or Disagree? People ought to know the ten Commandments better

Exodus 20 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. ²"You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on 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 fathers 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 manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹For 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 manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Exodus 34:28 tells us that there are 10 commandments (literally 10 words). Scripture, however, does not specify how to number them. Take a moment to number the Ten Commandments as they appear in Exodus 20 (they are repeated in Deuteronomy 5) on the first page. We will compare answers.

Why Study the Ten Commandments?

The Ten Commandments were intended for the Old Testament Jews.

The Ten Commandments apply to all people of all times.

These statements may seem contradictory and are frequently misunderstood. We will take a closer look at each of them.

Intended for the Old Testament Jews

Describe the setting of the giving of the Ten Commandments.

How did God demonstrate that these Commandments had a special importance for the people.

What are some of the other things God commanded the people on this occasion?

The Laws God gave on Sinai were given to the nation of Israel and do not apply directly to people of other nations and other time periods. This is especially clear when considering the 3rd Commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day."

Colossians 2: ¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. ¹⁶Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

What special purpose did the Sabbath and other ceremonies serve for the Israelites?

Apply to All People

Although written in Old Testament terminology, the Ten Commandments describe God's moral law. The moral law is God's perfect will, expectations, and demands for his people. The Ten Commandments are therefore a useful summary to assist us in applying God's law.

1. The Ten Commandments correspond to God's law written in people's hearts.

Romans 2:14-15: Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

2. The New Testament repeats many of the Ten Commandments as summaries of God's law.

Romans 13:9-10: The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

3. Even Jesus uses the commandments this way.

Matthew 19:17-19: Jesus replied, "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." "Which ones?" the man replied. "Jesus replied, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'"

4. Sins that the apostles warn against are sins against the Ten Commandments.

Galatians 5:19-21: The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

Digging Deeper

Matthew 5:27-28: You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

1 John 3:15: Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

Agree or Disagree?

God is more concerned with our thoughts than with our outward actions.

Romans 7:7: I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."

What does it mean to covet?

Why would Paul not have understood the sin of coveting without the law?

Using the Ten Commandments

1. When used as a mirror, the Ten Commandments _____

Romans 3:20: Through the law we become conscious of sin.

2. When used as a curb, the Ten Commandments _____

How do they accomplish this (see Exodus 20:5)?

3. When used as a guide, the Ten Commandments _____

To whom does this use apply?

Why is it necessary to have the law as a guide?

Romans 6:13: Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.