



CAYA Series – 52 Stories of the Bible

The Ten Commandments

Exodus: The Ten Commandments, found in Exodus 20, are not rules to follow, but they give form and structure to how our love for God (the Shema) should manifest itself in how we treat God and others

[<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/ten-commandments/major-stories- bible>]

LEARNERS WILL:

- Explain how the words “unconditional” and “obedience” relate to the Covenant statement “I will be their God and they will be my people”
- Explain the meaning and definition of the word “Yahweh”
- Discuss how the first four commandments found in Exodus 20 verses 12-17 provide direction on how we are to relate to and treat other people
- Verbally quote the “greatest commandment” found in Mark Chapter 12 verses 30-31

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

This is the story of Moses and the giving of the Law, both the Ten Commandments, also called the Decalogue, and also the laws that follow. Here in Exodus Chapter 20, God entered into a covenantal relationship with Abraham and within the context of that relationship, within the context of that covenant, God made certain promises to Abraham. He promised that he would have descendants, land, and that God would bless the world through his descendants.

COVENANT – Old Testament meaning is bond. Where 2 or more parties are bound together.

The covenant between man and man is bilateral where 2 equal parties both vow by oath and each having equal privileges and responsibilities would carry out their assigned roles.

GOD’S COVENANT WITH MAN IS UNILATERAL.

God initiated, determined the elements, and confirmed His covenant with humanity. Man is a recipient of the covenant. Not a contributor to the covenant. Man is not expected to offer elements of the bond but is called on to accept it as offered, to keep it as demanded, and to receive the results that God, by oath, assures will not be withheld.

SUMMARY OF COVENANT IN EXODUS 6:7

God says, “**I will be their God and they will be my people.**”

The first half of the covenant is, “I will be their God”. This is an Unconditional covenant.

The second half of the covenant is, “**they shall be my people.**” This is a conditional covenant.

So how do the Ten Commandments start to unpack this central affirmation that Yahweh is Our God?

THE FIRST FOUR COMMANDMENTS: FOCUS ON GOD – (EXODUS 20:1-4)

FIRST COMMANDMENT (VERSES 1-3)

The first four of the Ten Commandments are focused on how you and I relate to God. If God is our God and no one else is our God, how does that impact how we relate to him? So we start with the first commandment in Exodus 20. Number One: “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

SECOND COMMANDMENT (VERSES 4-6)

The second commandment, verse 4, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them.” Why? “For I, Yahweh, your God, am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children of the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.” **The second commandment is a prohibition against making images of God and then worshipping those images.**

THIRD COMMANDMENT (VERSE 7)

The third commandment is in verse 7, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” You see, **if Yahweh is my only God then I do not want to trivialize Him. I do not want to treat Him with disrespect. I want to give Him glory;** I do not want to take glory away from Him. That is what the third commandment is all about. **To take God’s name in vain is to take His character in vain. It is to take something that is holy and pure and separate and to treat it as something that is common and vain and profane.**

FOURTH COMMANDMENT (VERSES 8-11)

The fourth commandment is “Remember the Sabbath day” (the last day of the week), “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor

and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son, or your daughter, your male servant or your female servant, or your livestock or the sojourner who is within your gates.” Do you want to know why? Well, here is why. “For in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and then He rested the seventh day. And therefore, Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

COMMANDMENTS FIVE THROUGH TEN: FOCUS ON PEOPLE

*Commandments five through ten shift their focus a bit and ask the question, “If Yahweh is my God, if He is my only God, then how does that affect how I relate to other people?” That is the basic point of commandments five through ten. **The first of those focus on people closest to us, our family.***

FIFTH COMMANDMENT (VERSE 12)

The fifth commandment is in verse 12, “Honor your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land, that the Lord your God is giving you.” The fifth commandment is not saying they gave you birth and therefore do what they tell you to do. **The fifth commandment is that Yahweh is your God and therefore His command is for you to honor your mother and your father.**

COMMANDMENTS SIX THROUGH NINE (VERSES 13-16)

Commandments six through nine all deal with taking things from your neighbor. If Yahweh is our God, then we will not take another person’s life. “You shall not kill.” If Yahweh is your God, you will not take another man’s or another woman’s spouse. “You shall not commit adultery.” If Yahweh is your God, you will not take another person’s property. “You shall not steal.” and if Yahweh is your God, you will not take another person’s reputation and possibly their freedom. “You shall not commit false witness.” You shall not lie about them in a court of law.

TENTH COMMANDMENT (VERSE 17)

The tenth commandment, “Thou shall not covet.” In other words, not wanting what belongs to other people. It is a little different from commandments two through nine, but it is very much like commandment one because **the tenth commandment deals with the heart or heart attitude.**

DO THE 10 COMMANDMENTS MATTER TODAY?

Yes they do!! Jesus states in Matthew 5:17-18, near the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets.” (That is the Jewish way of referring to the Old Testament.) “I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the Law until all is accomplished, until all is fulfilled.” Yes, they still matter.

IS ONE COMMANDMENT MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE OTHERS?

This was kind of the “in” theological question of the day. Jesus states in Mark 12:29-31, “The most important is, ‘Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ And even though they asked for one commandment, He says, “You can’t say the first without the second. The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.’” This is a tremendously important passage in the New Testament as we seek to understand the relevance of the Old Testament, especially the Old Testament Decalogue, because Jesus is quoting two Old Testament passages that summarize of all the Ten Commandments. So He is affirming the significance of the commandments, but He is also boiling it down into two commandments. If we just understand and we follow these two commandments, then we will in essence be obeying the Ten Commandments.

LOVE GOD (DEUTERONOMY 6:4)

Jesus quotes two Old Testament passages to summarize the Ten Commandments. The first is Deuteronomy 6:4. It is called the Shamaz and is repeated daily by even modern Jews. “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and all your mind, and all your strength. Deuteronomy 6:4 is affirmed by Jesus as the summary of the first four commandments. If you love God, you will show it and I will show it, by keeping the nine commandments and by making the Sabbath different from the other days of the week. The Sabbath was the final day of the workweek. Because the resurrection was on Sunday, the Christian Church shifted things and Sunday becomes the final day of the week.

If you and I love God we will show it by making the last day of the workweek, Sabbath, our Sunday, different. Legalism says that all God wants is external obedience, forget the heart. There are Ten Commandments. The Sabbath commandment is part of the very fabric of creation. This is not Old Testament Law that we can somehow ignore. The Sabbath did not start in Exodus 20. The Sabbath started in Genesis 2, and creation does not end with Adam and Eve. The culmination of creation is in Genesis 2 when God rested from His work. He instituted a seven-day pattern and insists creation rests as he rests. This is written into the very fabric of creation that there is to be a cyclical rest, “Some might say, I don’t need to do that. I have other ways of worshipping Him.” God said, “I have established a cycle in creation, a cycle that involves rest, to give your bodies rest and to give you time to focus and worship Me. That’s what I expect from you.” So this is Deuteronomy 6:4, “You shall love the Lord your God” and how that summarizes the first four commandments.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

The second verse that Jesus quotes in Mark 12:29-31 is in Leviticus of all places, Leviticus 19:18 which says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Leviticus 19:18 is the summary of Commandments 5-10. If you love your neighbor, you are going to start at home and honor your parents. If you love your neighbor, you are not going to murder them. If you love your neighbor, you are not going to take his wife. If you love your neighbor, you are not going to take his property. If you love your neighbor, you are not going to take his reputation or his freedom. If you love your neighbor, you will not covet because covetousness is the opposite of love. Paul tells the Romans in Chapter 13:9 the commandments. “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” and then Paul adds, “And any other commandment, are summed up in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Yes, the Ten Commandments are just as true today as they were

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thousands of years ago. They are summarized by Jesus in Mark 12, in the command of Deuteronomy 6:4 to love God, and in the commandment of Leviticus 19 to love your neighbor. If we love God, if we love our neighbors, then Yahweh is my God. That is what my God expects of me and you.

TWO EXTREMES

THE LAW IS EVERYTHING

One form of extreme legalism states that external obedience is the only thing that God requires. Forget the heart, forget motives, all that really matters is that I go through the external steps or go through the motions. I go to church once in a while, maybe give a little once in a while, I kick the dog once in a while” and somehow that is all that God requires. This is a legalist approach.

Jesus wants a hart that is sold out to Him. One that is completely and totally committed to Him and His kingdom.

If external obedience was what the Ten Commandments were really all about, you could not summarize them with love. If the commandments were only external, then love would not be the appropriate or an adequate summation of the Law. But because loving God and loving your neighbor is the summation of the Law, then the commandments really have to do with what is inside. They have to do with our hearts. Romans 12 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” That it starts in your heart, it starts in your head and then it flows from the inside out. Legalism is wrong because it starts at the wrong end of the spectrum. The Ten Commandments start in the heart. The Law starts in the heart, it starts with a renewal of our minds and our commitment not to covet, our commitment not to hate, our commitment not to lust, our commitment to put Jesus on the throne of our lives, and that works out in external obedience. So legalism is one of the wrong extremes. All it does is put a heavy burden on your shoulders that you cannot possibly keep.

OBEDIENCE IS UNNECESSARY

There is also the extreme that thinks obedience is unnecessary. Instead of having the attention on the externals people say that obedience is not important at all. I can live any way I want and nothing matters. There is nothing to being a covenantal person. There is nothing to being a member of the covenant. This is the other extreme. Holiness always matters. Always.

Exodus 19, verse 5, “If you will indeed obey My voice, if you will keep My covenant, then you shall be My treasured possession.” There are two sides to our covenant, to the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There were two sides to the covenant with Moses. There are two sides to the covenant that you and I have with our God. And He is committed to being our God and doing everything that is necessary to be our God, to preserve us, to provide for us, to care for us. There is another side to the covenant, another side to saying, “I will be His people.” The message of the Old Testament and the message of the New Testament is unanimous in that God gives us opportunities to be obedient to

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Him. He tells us what His will is, He enables us to be obedient to His will and you and I have the joyful task of pleasing our God and Savior, of being obedient to Him and bringing, as Jesus says, glory to His name. "By this My Father is glorified, if you are obedient to his will." There are two sides to the covenant.

Remember, Yahweh is our God. What does that mean? It means that we are called to love God and worship him out of a heart of love. We will worship Him alone, we will not take His name in vain, we will honor Him in our worship and the rest. And if we have Yahweh as our God, then we will love our neighbors. We will not steal from them, kill them, or take their possessions. We will honor them.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength and then love your neighbor as yourself." This is our side of this great covenant that God in His grace and His mercy has extended to each one of us.

[Small Group Activity]

Stories of the Bible CAYA Series

1. Explain how the words “unconditional” and “obedience” relate to the covenant statement “I will be their God and they will be my people.”
2. Explain the meaning and definition of the word “Yahweh”.
3. Discuss how the first four commandments found in Exodus Chapter 20 verses 3-11, focus on how you and I are to relate to God. How does this play out in our everyday lives?
4. Explain how commandments 5 – 10 found in Exodus 20 verses 12 – 17 provide direction on how we are to relate to and treat other people.
5. Verbally quote the “greatest commandment” found in Mark 12:30-31 and discuss why this commandment is really a heart issue.