Preschool–Grade 6

The Ten Commandments

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: God's rules are good. God gave the ten commandments to people He had already rescued and loved, and they show us how to love God and love other people.
Bible passage: Exodus 19:1–20:21 and Exodus 31:18. Read them before class.
Memory verse: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." *Exodus 20:3 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), 10 index cards or paper slips, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Write each commandment in plain words on its own card, with its reference (see the list in part 2).

1. Opening game: Why This Rule? (5–10 minutes)

Read a rule kids know, and let them guess the reason for it: "Look both ways before you cross the street." "Wash your hands before you eat." "Wear a seat belt." "No running at the pool." After each one, ask: *Is this rule there to spoil your fun or to protect you?* Say: "Good rules come from people who care about us. Today we'll read ten rules that came from God Himself."

2. Bible story: God Speaks from Mount Sinai (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Exodus 19. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

At the mountain. In the third month after the children of Israel left Egypt, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped before the mount (Exodus 19:1–2). **Look up Exodus 19:4. Bare** means carried. God had carried them out of slavery like an eagle carries its young. If they would obey His voice and keep His **covenant**, His promise-agreement with them, they would be a **peculiar treasure**, a special treasure that belongs to God (19:5). **Look up Exodus 19:8.** The people promised to do all the LORD said.

Get ready. God told Moses to **sanctify** the people, to make them clean and ready for God, and to have them wash their clothes, because on the third day the LORD would come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people (19:10–11). Moses set **bounds**, a border, around the mountain so no one would go up or touch it (19:12).

The third day. Look up Exodus 19:16. Thunder, lightning, a thick cloud and a very loud trumpet, and all the people trembled. Mount Sinai was covered in smoke, because the LORD came down on it in fire, and the whole mountain **quaked**, or shook (19:18). The trumpet **waxed louder and louder**, which means it kept getting louder, and God answered Moses by a voice (19:19).

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God speaks. Look up Exodus 20:1–2. Before God gave one rule, He reminded them who He is: the God who brought them out of the **house of bondage**, the place where they were slaves. Then God gave the ten commandments, in this order. As you read each one, hold up its card:

1. No other gods before God (20:3). **Look up Exodus 20:3.**
2. Do not make a **graven image**, an idol carved to bow down to and worship (20:4–6).
3. Do not take God's name **in vain**, which means in an empty or careless way (20:7).
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy (20:8–11). God made heaven and earth in six days and rested the seventh day.
5. **Look up Exodus 20:12. Honour** means respect and obey.
6. Do not kill (20:13). God made every person, and every life is precious to Him.
7. Do not commit adultery (20:14): keep your promises in marriage.
8. Do not steal (20:15).
9. Do not **bear false witness**, which means telling lies about someone (20:16).
10. Do not **covet**, which means wanting what belongs to your neighbor so much that it fills your heart (20:17).

The people's fear. The people saw the thunderings and lightnings and the mountain smoking, and they stood **afar off**, far away (20:18). They asked Moses to speak to them instead (20:19). **Look up Exodus 20:20. Prove** means test. God came to show them how great He is, so they would respect Him and not sin.

Tables of stone. Look up Exodus 31:18. Tables are flat stone tablets, and the **testimony** is God's covenant words. They were written on both sides (32:15). The Bible calls them "the ten commandments" (34:28).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. God rescued His people first (20:2) and gave the rules after. Why does that matter? Do we obey God to make Him love us, or because He already does?
2. The first commandment is about God (20:3). Why do you think it comes first?
3. Which commandment is hardest for kids your age? Why?
4. Number 10 is about what is in our heart, not just what we do (20:17). Why does God care about our hearts?
5. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). How is obeying God a way to love Him?

Recall questions

1. What did the people promise in Exodus 19:8? *(All that the LORD hath spoken we will do)*
2. Why was Mount Sinai covered in smoke? *(The LORD came down on it in fire, 19:18)*
3. Who wrote on the tables of stone? *(God, with His finger, 31:18)*

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4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **thou shalt** means you must, **gods** means anything people worship or love more than the real God, and **before me** means in God's place. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "God's commandments are good, but none of us has kept them perfectly. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. God loves you. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: choose one commandment that is hard for you. Ask God to help you, and obey it every day.

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6. Activity: Love God or Love Others? (10–15 minutes)

Look up Matthew 22:37–39. Jesus said the first and great commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul and mind, and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. Write "Love God" and "Love others" at the top of the board. Mix up the 10 cards. Kids take turns drawing a card, reading it and its verse out loud, and taping it under the right heading. *(Love God: numbers 1–4, Exodus 20:3–11. Love others: numbers 5–10, 20:12–17.)* Then put the cards back in order from 1 to 10 together, and see who can say all ten in order.
Early finishers: the Ten Commandments word search, crossword, maze or worksheet (vbshq.com/bible-stories/ten-commandments).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for rescuing us and loving us first. Thank You that Your rules are good. Help us love You with all our heart and love the people around us. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks about number 7: say, "God wants a husband and wife to keep their promise to love each other all their lives." Keep it at that.
About the border around the mountain: God told the people not to go up or touch the mountain (Exodus 19:12–13). This lesson leaves out the punishment for crossing it; read it yourself before class. If a child asks, say: God is holy, and He wanted His people to be safe.

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