Preschool–Grade 6

The Ten Commandments

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: God's rules are good. God rescued His people first and then gave them His commandments, and Jesus said that loving Him means keeping them.
Bible passage: Exodus 19:1–20:21 and Exodus 31:18. Students read Exodus 19:1–8 and 19:16–20:21 out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." *Exodus 20:3 (KJV)* and "If ye love me, keep my commandments." *John 14:15 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Exodus 19–20, Exodus 31:18 and Matthew 22:37–40. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: In the Ten or Not? (5–10 minutes)

Read each saying. Students stand up if they think it is one of the ten commandments, and stay seated if it isn't. After each one, give the answer.

1. "Thou shalt not steal." *(In: Exodus 20:15)* 2) "Love thy neighbour as thyself." *(Not one of the ten. It is in Leviticus 19:18, and Jesus called it the second great commandment, Matthew 22:39)* 3) "Honour thy father and thy mother." *(In: 20:12)* 4) "Cleanliness is next to godliness." *(Not in the Bible at all)* 5) "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." *(In: 20:8)* 6) "Thou shalt not lie." *(Not those exact words. Number 9 says "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour," 20:16)* 7) "Thou shalt not covet." *(In: 20:17)*
   Ask: *Why does it matter to know what God actually said?* Say: "Today we read the ten commandments straight from the text."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Exodus 19:1–8. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **pitched** (19:2): set up their tents; **the mount** (19:2): the mountain
- **bare you on eagles' wings** (19:4): carried you like an eagle carries its young
- **covenant** (19:5): God's promise-agreement with His people
- **peculiar treasure** (19:5): a treasure that belongs to God alone; **an holy nation** (19:6): a people set apart for God

Tell the middle part in your own words: God told Moses to **sanctify** the people (make them clean and ready) and to have them wash their clothes, because on the third day He 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 touch it (19:12).

Read out loud: Exodus 19:16–20:21. Old words in this passage:

- **quaked** (19:18): shook; **waxed louder** (19:19): kept getting louder
- **house of bondage** (20:2): the place where they were slaves
- **graven image** (20:4): an idol carved to be worshiped; **jealous** (20:5): God will not share His people's worship with an idol
- **in vain** (20:7): in an empty, careless way; **hallowed** (20:11): made holy, set apart
- **commit adultery** (20:14): break the promise of marriage; God wants a husband and wife to be faithful to each other all their lives
- **bear false witness** (20:16): tell lies about someone; **covet** (20:17): want what belongs to someone else
- **prove** (20:20): test; **afar off** (20:21): far away

Then read **Exodus 31:18**: God gave Moses "two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." Next, Exodus 32:15 adds that they were written on both sides, and Exodus 34:28 calls them "the ten commandments."

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Before giving any commandment, God said, "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt" (20:2). Why does it matter that the rescue came before the rules?
2. The people said, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do" (19:8). Is it easy to promise to obey God? What makes it hard to keep that promise?
3. Read Matthew 22:37–40. Which commandments show us how to love God, and which show us how to love people?
4. Number 10, "Thou shalt not covet" (20:17), is about what goes on inside us. Why do you think God ends the list with a commandment about the heart?
5. Moses said, "Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not" (20:20). How can someone fear God and still not be afraid of Him?
6. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Jesus speaks the way God spoke at Sinai. What does that tell you about who Jesus is?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **thou shalt** means you must; **other gods before me** means anything that takes God's place, whether an idol, money, popularity or anything we love more than Him. In John 14:15, **ye** means you. Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Exodus 20:3 this week; keep working on John 14:15 next week too.

Free to print & copy for church, classroom & home · Please don't resell or re-post

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "The commandments show us what God is like and how He wants us to live. They also show us that we fall short: 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). God loves you, and He did not leave us there. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Is there anything in my life that takes God's place, something I love or think about more than Him (Exodus 20:3)?
2. Which commandment do I find hardest to keep? What would obeying it look like this week?
3. Write a short prayer telling God you love Him and asking Him to help you keep His commandments (John 14:15).
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: read Exodus 20:1–17 at home with your family. Each day, pick one commandment and look for one way to obey it.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for rescuing us before we ever obeyed You. Thank You that Your commandments are good. Help us love You first and most, and show our love by keeping Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks about the punishment for touching the mountain: this lesson leaves out the end of Exodus 19:12–13. Read it yourself before class. Answer honestly and gently: God is holy, and He warned the people to stay back so they would not be harmed (19:21). God made a way for His people to come near Him, and in Jesus He came near to us.

Free to print & copy for church, classroom & home · Please don't resell or re-post