## Opening Prayer Service

#### Gather

Lord God, long ago you called Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam, and the people of Israel into a special relationship with you. We pray now that we may recognize how you have called us into a special relationship with special responsibilities for living as God’s people today. We ask this in the name of your loving Son, Jesus. Amen.

#### Listen

**Scene 1: Call of Abraham (Genesis 17:1-7)**

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.’ Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ‘As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

**Scene 2: Call of Moses (Exodus 3:3-15)**

*The* *Prince of Egypt* Movie Segment: The Burning Bush

**Scene 3: Deliverance and the Covenant of Sinai**

*The Prince of Egypt* Movie Segments: Crossing the Red Sea to Ten Commandments

**Conclude by reading Exodus 19:3-6.** Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.’

#### Respond

We have a lifelong relationship with God. God loves us first and wants us to respond in love. God’s great wish is that our relationship with him will last forever. God promised the people of Israel a special relationship—that he would be their God for all time. God told their leader, Moses, to tell the people, “If you hear my words and keep my covenant, you shall be my special people, dearer to me than all people. You shall be a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5-6).

For their part the people of Israel promised to be faithful to God. This included living the Law that God had written on the hearts and summed up in the Ten Commandments. Obeying the commandments of the Law was not a burden but rather a way for people to live out their relationship with God.

#### Go Forth

Lord God, thank you for calling us into a special relationship with you. Open our ears that we may hear your words. Open our hearts that we may treasure your love for us. Give us the courage to live your Commandments every day as a sign of faithfulness to our living relationship with you. Amen.

## The Ten Commandments

#### I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.

#### You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

#### Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day.

#### Honor your father and your mother.

#### You shall not kill.

#### You shall not commit adultery.

#### You shall not steal.

#### You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

#### You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.

#### You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.

## Handout #2.

## House of Values

**Foundation of the House**:

Write down the (most important) moral values that guide how you live your life as an individual or family. What are the things you will not budge on?

**Walls of the House:**

What are the kinds of things you do to strengthen and support the moral values in your foundation—people, activities?

**Windows of the House:**

What are some of the specific ways you try to live your moral values?

##

## Handout #3.

## Rules for Living Our Relationship with God

*But this command I gave them, “Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you.”* (Jeremiah 7.23)

Imagine you are making rules for living as God’s people. If you could include only 10 rules, which ones would you include? Then identify one or two good things that would happen if people kept each rule.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Good things that would result:

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Good things that would result:

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Good things that would result:

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Good things that would result:

5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Good things that would result:

6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Good things that would result:

7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Good things that would result:

8. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Good things that would result:

9. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Good things that would result:

10. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Good things that would result:

## Handout #4.

## The Ten Commandments

Just as the Ten Commandments helped the Israelites live their covenant relationship with God, the Commandments are also a guide for us. They tell us the minimum that is required to love God and others. The first three commandments show us how to be faithful to God. The last seven show us how to treat other people with love.

#### 1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.

*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.*

*You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments* (Exodus 20:2-6).

The great purpose of life is friendship with God, which leads to eternal life.

* Place your faith in God alone.
* Worship, praise, and thank the Creator.
* Believe in, trust in, and love God.

#### 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

*You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name* (Exodus 20:7).

What we say reflects who we are. We respect the Lord’s name.

* Speak God’s name with reverence or great respect.
* Don’t curse.
* Never call on God to witness to a lie.

#### 3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day.

*Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it* (Exodus 20:8-11).

On Sunday we remember Jesus’ resurrection. We set aside this day as a day of rest.

* Participate in the Sunday worship.
* Rest and avoid unnecessary work on Sunday.
* Spend time enjoying your family. Perform a work of service. Take part in church activities.

#### 4. Honor your father and your mother.

*Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you* (Exodus 20:12).

Parents should love and care for their children. Children should respect and obey their parents and other people with proper authority.

* Respect, honor, and obey parents, older family members, and all those who have proper authority.

#### 5. You shall not kill.

*You shall not murder* (Exodus 20:13).

We respect and protect God’s gift of life.

* Respect and protect the lives of others and your own life.
* Show special care for unborn babies, people who are elderly, and those who are dying.

#### 6. You shall not commit adultery.

*You shall not commit adultery* (Exodus 20:14).

We honor family life. We are faithful to our marriage promises and God’s gift of sexuality.

* Practice chastity. Express God’s gift of sexuality in the right way according to our state in life.
* Be faithful and loyal to friends and family.

#### 7. You shall not steal.

*You shall not steal* (Exodus 20:15).

We respect the property of others, promote justice, and take responsibility for shared resources.

* Respect the things that belong to others and the resources that all people depend on.
* Share what you have with those in need.
* Work for justice.

#### 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor* (Exodus 20:16).

We are honest and truthful. We do not brag about ourselves or make fun of others. We respect the truth and defend others’ good name.

* Be honest and truthful.
* Do not brag about yourself.
* Do not say untruthful or negative things about others.

#### 9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.

*You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor* (Exodus 20:17).

We are not envious of other people’s relationships. We dress and act in modest ways.

* Practice modesty in thoughts, words, dress, and actions.

#### 10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.

*You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor* (Exodus 20:17).

We do not envy what others have. We are not greedy. We rejoice in others’ good fortune and help them in hard times.

* Keep ourselves free of envy and overattachment to material goods.
* Do not be jealous of others’ possessions.
* Do not be greedy.

## Handout #5.

## Loving God with Our Whole Heart, Mind, and Soul

The first commandment says, “I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.”

The **first commandment** requires you to honor and worship only God. Worship is the adoration and praise that is due to God. You worship God when you worship with your Christian community, when you pray, and when you live a life that puts God first.

When you worship God, you believe in him as the source of creation and salvation. You show that you and all creatures rely on him for life. You show your trust and hope in him.

* **How do we honor and worship God in our family? How do we show trust and hope in God? What are the things that we do that dishonor God?**

The **second commandment** is connected to the first: “You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.” God’s name is sacred, or holy, because God is sacred. When God called Moses to be the leader of his people, God revealed his name to Moses. God shared his name with his people because he loved and trusted them. In return, God’s people are to bless and praise God’s holy name.

This commandment calls you to always use the name of God with reverence and respect. Respecting God’s name is a sign of the respect God deserves. It is a sin against God’s name to curse or to use God’s name to swear to a lie.

You probably use God’s name most often in prayer. Every time you make the Sign of the Cross, you call on the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This is a reminder of your baptism. Calling on God’s name strengthens you to live as a child of God and a follower of Christ.

The second commandment also reminds you that God calls each person by name. A person’s name is a sign of that person’s dignity. You are to use the names of others with respect.

* **How do we respect God’s name in our family? What are things we do that disrespect God’s name?**

Following the first, second, and third commandments helps you love God and grow closer to him. The **third commandment** teaches you to honor God by celebrating Sunday, the greatest and most special day of the week for Christians. The third commandment is this: Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day.

Sunday is the first day of the week. Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. This is why Sunday is known as the Lord’s day. Gathering on Sunday for worship has been the center of the church’s life since the time of the Apostles. This is because Sunday is the day of the Lord’ resurrection.

* **How do we keep holy the Lord’s day? How do we fail to keep holy the Lord’s day?**

## Handout #6.

## Making Time for God

Think about how you or your family currently spends time in a ***typical week***. Identify the number of hours your family spends on typical daily activities, such as school, work, homework (adults and children), activities and sports, family meals, family activities, entertainment/TV, online viewing like YouTube and Facebook, computer time, listening to music, sleep, etc. First determine your typical activities. Second, figure out how much time you spend on these activities. Finally, use your “Family Time Chart” to draw a picture of how your family uses time for each activity. Draw a pie chart, dividing up the chart based on the amount of time you allocate to each activity.

After your family has completed the “Family Time Chart” try to determine the “God activities” you engage in each week.

* How does your family live its responsibilities to God each week? What do you do?
* How much time does your family give to God each week?
* What can you do to make God a more important part of your family’s life?

## Time Chart Worksheet

“For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” (Luke 12:34).

## Handout #7.

## Ten Commandment Flash Cards

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me. | 6. You shall not commit adultery. |
| 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. | 7. You shall not steal. |
| 3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day. | 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.  |
| 4. Honor your father and your mother.  | 9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. |
| 5. You shall not kill. | 10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods. |

## Handout #8.

## Ten Commandments Coloring Page

1. **I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.**
2. **You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**
3. **Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day.**
4. **Honor your father and your mother.**
5. **You shall not kill.**

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1. **You shall not commit adultery.**
2. **You shall not steal.**
3. **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**
4. **You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.**
5. **You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.**

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## Handout #9.

## Living the First Three Commandments

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Loving God with Our Whole Heart, Mind, and Soul1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.*adore, or humbly depend on and honor and praise, God above all things*How will we keep God #1 in our lives? How will we honor and worship God in our family?  | Loving God with Our Whole Heart, Mind, and Soul2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.*remain faithful to our promise to love God and honor his name*How will we honor and respect the name of God in our family?  | Loving God with Our Whole Heart, Mind, and Soul3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day.*set aside time to worship God as he deserves*How will we worship God and rest on the Lord’s day in our family?  |

## Handout #10.

## Relationships Mean Responsibilities

#### Relationship Responsibilities

**Parents**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Teachers** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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## Handout #11.

## The Ten Commandments

Just as the Ten Commandments helped the Israelites live their covenant relationship with God, the Commandments are also a guide for us. They tell us the minimum that is required to love God and others. The first three commandments show us how to be faithful to God. The last seven show us how to treat other people with love.

#### 1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.

*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.*

*You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.* (Exodus 20:2-6)

God’s first commandment is a call to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him above all else. We do this by prayer: praising him, lifting our hearts and minds to him, spending time with him, being grateful to him for everything that comes our way, and placing our needs before him. We believe in, hope in, and love him by worshipping him as our Creator and Lord. The first commandment enjoins us to love God with everything we’ve got. It stands to reason, then, that we sin against this commandment by violating this love.

#### 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

*You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.* (Exodus 20:7)

The second commandment requires us to have respect for God’s name. As we learned from the first commandment, God’s name is sacred and meant for adoration. Therefore, we are not to speak his name except to bless, honor, and praise him. Uttering obscenities involving his name, cursing someone using the name of the Lord, or employing God’s name in crude language defines and cheapens that which is most sacred to our faith.

Does our use of speech deserve to be ranked the second of the commandments? In fact, isn’t it true that our speech reflects whether or not we have a sense of the sacred? Without a sense of the sacred, all the other commandments are groundless. (For example, killing is wrong because human life is sacred.) Indeed, if we spoke reverentially about God and his creatures we would be contributing greatly to the spirit of holiness without which our world could not survive. In a sense, all of our speech either witnesses to or mocks God.

#### 3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day.

*Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.* (Exodus 20:8-11)

Can anyone question that human beings need rest? Just as certainly, we have a need to praise and acknowledge God. Rest is most refreshing when we establish a rhythm to it. Similarly, our worship needs a rhythm and regularity.

We keep Sunday holy by participating in worship on that day and by abstaining from activities or work that hinders us from the spiritual observance of the Lord’s Day. We live the spirit of Psalm 118:24 that exclaims: “This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Participation in the Sunday worship is an opportunity to remember and praise God in Jesus Christ. However, it is not for us as individuals alone. Through worship we strengthen one another’s faith. Even beyond that, a community gathered at Sunday worship testifies to all humanity that God is good, worthy of praise, and the hope for the world’s salvation. By participating we are adding our voices to a great chorus praising God throughout the world.

#### 4. Honor your father and your mother.

*Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.* (Exodus 20:12)

The Ten Commandments recognize that mutual care and responsibility within families are essential to a thriving community. The fourth commandment reminds us that God does not operate in a realm far above and distant from us. Rather, he is present within families and among those closest to us. Honor and respect are due those immediately responsible for us. From this home base, care and concern flow out to the larger communities to which we belong.

In societies that function well, children honor their parents and elders, and parents and elders oversee the development and welfare of children. The fourth commandment instructs us to always aspire to such a society.

#### 5. You shall not kill.

*You shall not murder.* (Exodus 20:13)

The fifth commandment lays out our basic obligation regarding human life in very direct language: Do not kill. In positive terms it means treating human life in all its manifestations and in all stages of its development with the special care that it deserves. We are asked to respect and protect human life, and to evaluate everything we do as individuals and as a nation in light of its impact on the dignity of the human person.

#### 6. You shall not commit adultery.

*You shall not commit adultery.* (Exodus 20:14)

The sixth and ninth commandments bring us to an examination of the wonderful gift God has given us—sexuality. We were created out of love, through love, and for love. Like all good things, however, misuse and manipulation of sexuality can cloud its beauty and goodness. The decisions we make regarding our sexual capacities can enrich or dehumanize us. Our sexuality is integral to who we are. Our attitudes, values, and behaviors related to sexuality tell us a great deal about ourselves. Through the creative and responsible ways that we express our sexuality, we celebrate ourselves—body and soul, female and male—as made in God’s image and as reflections of his love.

#### 7. You shall not steal.

*You shall not steal.* (Exodus 20:15)

The seventh and tenth commandments bring us to a discussion of material things. Violation of these commandments has led to breakdown within families, hostility in communities, widespread deprivation, and warfare between nations. Stealing and covetousness are personal matters with immense social consequences. As implied in the seventh and tenth commandments, generosity and seeking the good of others are key characteristics of living the moral life. Justice is essential to a full application of the commandments. We are called to alleviate suffering experienced by those around us.

#### 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.* (Exodus 20:16)

As with all the commandments, the eighth commandment has broader applications than the narrow meaning of the words. That is, it means much more than simply not speaking falsely about others. The commandment points out that only a life lived with honesty and integrity reflects our dignity as persons created by God and in his image. In short, it obliges us to live the truth in love.

#### 9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.

*You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.* (Exodus 20:17)

#### 10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.

*You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.* (Exodus 20:17)

## Handout #12.

## Loving God with Our Whole Heart, Mind, and Soul

“’You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment.” (Matthew 22:37)

#### Who Is First in Your Life?

*The First Commandment: I am the Lord you God. You shall not have strange gods before me.*

**Imagine. . .**

Everybody has a god in the sense that everyone puts something first in his or her life. It could be God, the creator and father of all. It could also be another person, money, power, fame, prestige, self, career, material goods, and so forth. There must be something in your life which operates as your source of meaning and strength, something which you regard as the most important priority in your life.

* What would it mean if money was your god? What would you be most concerned about in life? How would you act?
* What would it mean if fame or popularity was your god? What would you be most concerned about in life? How would you act?
* What would it mean if entertainment (music, films, video games) and having lots of fun in life was your god? What would you be most concerned about in life? How would you act?

**Make God First in Our Lives. . .**

* We show our love of God by taking our responsibilities toward God seriously and giving Him our highest priority in life.
* We spend time in prayer.
* We are grateful to God for all the gifts we enjoy and demonstrate this in our prayer and our generosity towards others.
* We believe in God’s great love for us and all humanity.

**How can you live the first commandment—making God first in your life?**

#### How Do We Speak about God?

*The Second Commandment: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.*

**Imagine. . .**

* What does it say about our love of God when we disrespect God through words or gestures of malice, hostility or dishonor?
* What does it say about our lives when we fail to speak the truth? When we make a promise under oath, with God as a witness, and either do not intend to keep it or simply fail to do so?

**Show Respect for God’s Name. . .**

* Our speech reflects a sense of the sacred and witnesses to our love for God.
* We speak reverentially about God and his creatures and contribute greatly to the spirit of holiness without which our world could not survive.

**How can you live the second commandment—showing respect for God’s name?**

**How Do We Keep Sunday Holy?**

*The Third Commandment: Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day.*

**Imagine**. . .

* What would life be like without rest?
* What does it say about our love of God if we do not take time to praise, give thanks, and acknowledge God regularly through the community’s gathering at Sunday worship?

**Keep Holy the Lord’s Day. . .**

* We gather with the church community at Sunday worship.
* We rest and avoid unnecessary work on Sunday that would hinder us from the spiritual observance of the Lord’s day.
* We spend time enjoying our family, performing a work of service, taking part in church activities.

**How can you live the third commandment—keeping Sunday holy?**

## Handout #13.

## Loving God, Living the Commandments

### 1. Loving God throughout Our Life

#### Personal Reflection

Take a few moments to reflect on your experience of living the Ten Commandments throughout your life. Complete all the statements that relate to your life.

As a child, living the Ten Commandments meant. . .

As a teenager, living the Ten Commandments meant. . .

As a young adult, living the Ten Commandments meant. . .

As a parent, living the Ten Commandments meant. . .

Today, living the Ten Commandments means. . .

#### Group Sharing

Share with your group how the meaning of the Ten Commandments and the way you lived the commandments have changed from childhood to the present day. Give each person in the group time to share his or her reflections without interruptions or discussion.

#### 2. Love God and Neighbor—Interactive Essay

This essay is divided into two sections. For each section take turns reading the text aloud in the group or allow time for each person to read the section individually. Then reflect quietly on the questions and share your reflections with your group.

### The Law of Love

Read aloud the following Scripture passage from the Gospel of Matthew.

Then someone came to him and said, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’ And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The young man said to him, ‘I have kept all these; what do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions. (Matthew 19:16-22)

Read the following texts on the Rich Young Man and The Law and Love.

#### The Rich Young Man

The rich young man in Scripture (Matt. 19:16-22) came to Jesus with a pressing question: “What good deed must I do to have eternal life?” Inevitably this is the underlying question of any consideration of the moral life.

As we shall begin the story of the rich young man, note how the conversation gives rise to three questions about the moral law and the means of attaining salvation.

As the conversation begins, the young man asks Jesus, “What good deeds must I do to have eternal life?”

“If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments,” He replies.

By all appearances this response is both simple and clear. Yet in light of what Saint Paul writes in his Letters to the Romans and the Galatians, namely, that we are freed from the law, it raises a question, “Now we are discharged [i.e., freed] from the law,” he writes in Romans (7:6). We are justified in Christ Jesus, “not by works of the law,” he argues in Galatians (2:16). Hence our first question: If Christian morality is governed by law, how can it be characterized by freedom from the law?

Having heard Jesus’ reply, the young man then asks, “Which ones?” Jesus names several, including the prohibitions against killing, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, and dishonoring parents. Finally he adds, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

We might wonder whether these commandments are all part of a series, or does one, the command to love our neighbor as ourselves, overarch all the others? Hence our second question: Is Christian morality governed by law or by love, and does the one make the other superfluous?

Finally, after the young man has assured Jesus that he has kept all the laws, Jesus poses the final challenge. “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, . . . (Matt. 19:21).

This answer is also clear, but daunting, giving rise to our third question: What is the connection between the law and the way of perfection, especially as that way is outlined in the Beatitudes?

Let’s consider these questions.

Scripture tells us that “for freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal. 5:1). A morality centered on law was replaced by a call to Christian freedom and responsibility. That makes Jesus’ response to the rich young man’s question, “Keep the commandments,” a bit jarring.

But we need to remember that when Paul wrote his letter to the Galatian community, it was going through a major crisis. The issue was precisely the one brought up by the rich young man in Matthew’s story: how is one to be saved?

One answer, which was gaining prominence, was “observance of the law.” Certainly it had a solid footing in the Old Testament (for example, Deut. 27; Psalm 119; Sir. 24:22 ff.; Sir. 37:1-11) Nevertheless, Paul argued that that answer is false and misleading. False, because it could lead to the conclusion that the law saves us. Misleading, because it could give rise to the delusion that salvation is the fruit of our own efforts. Paul’s arguments are complicated and tightly packed, but the message is crystal clear. Salvation is not attained by works of the law but by faith in Christ.

Central to Paul’s thought is his understanding of salvation, which for him means deliverance from sin and death. With the fall of Adam and Eve, sin and death came into the world, and humans are powerless to overcome them. They have enslaved us and only Christ, who conquers sin and death by His own death and resurrection, can set us free. Therefore, if we are to be saved, we must have faith in Him. Faith brings justification. So “Christ has set us free”: free from sin, free from death, free from the Law itself.

Paul never repudiates the necessity to observe the law (cf. Romans 3:31), but he does remind us that “laws” of themselves are powerless. Christians of all generations must be reminded of this fact because inevitably they are tempted to think that salvation is effected by their observance of the law. From there it is an easy step to think that they can save themselves by observing the law.

With good reason, then, contemporary moral theology draws upon the Pauline teaching of salvation in Christ and freedom from the law. However, it also raises a new question: does law play a role in the moral life and, if so, how is it integrated into our life in Christ? For this we turn to the second question posed by Christ’s conversation with the rich young man.

### The Law and Love

Although Jesus ticks off a list of commandments the rich young man must observe if he is to be saved, there is never any question as to which of these is most important. Recall the story about the lawyer, who, in an attempt to “test him,” (Matt. 22:35) asks which commandment of the law is the greatest. Jesus did not hesitate. “’You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” Moreover, He said, “the second is like it; ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matt. 22:39). Paul agrees. “The whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:14).

Of course, Christians of every age have understood the Great Commandment. The question is, does it render the law superfluous? We are all aware of Saint Augustine’s striking axiom: “Love and do what you will.” Hasn’t he answered our question positively?

Paradoxically, we should respond no and yes. No, because, as (Saint) Augustine surely would agree, the law has been given to lead us to salvation. “I will never forget your precepts,” says the Psalmist, “for by them you have given me life” (Ps 119:93). In like manner Jesus tells the rich young man that if he is to possess eternal life, he must keep the commandments.

But if love has not replaced the law, it has transformed it. By its nature law establishes minimal standards. One who lives strictly “by the law” is content with the minimum. The law tells him what he absolutely must do or how much he can get by with. One who lives strictly “by the law,” conforms, but he runs the danger of doing so grudgingly.

Love transforms all that. One who lives by love is not content with the minimum or with living on the fringe, but lives to attain fully the object of one’s love. For example, Jacob agreed to work seven years for his uncle Laban in order to win Rachel as his bride. He did not experience those seven years as a long laborious contract to be dutifully observed. Rather transformed by love, they “seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her” (Gen. 29:20).

So it is with the moral law. Jesus tells us we are to love God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Love implies proper relationships. God’s law spells out what those relationships should look like. One who loves embraces them willingly, not grudgingly.

Thus, as regards the second great commandment, “love your neighbor as yourself,” Saint Paul writes: “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet’; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’. Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:8-10). Thus, “Love and do as you will,” for love will lead to observance of the law.

It is easy to speak of the law of love. It might even create a warm fuzzy feeling in our hearts. But is it possible to actually live it? Is it possible to go beyond the minimum? Or are we, like the rich young man, doomed to “go away sad,” when we hear Christ say, “If you wish to be perfect. . .”?

This is not an easy question to answer. At times the dilemma has been solved by suggesting that “the way of perfection” to which the rich young man was called, is a very special vocation. However, another answer is at hand if we recall that the great commandment to love God is an “inner law.” It is not imposed upon us from the outside, but is given to us from within. “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5). Christians are empowered to follow Jesus who was poor, they aren’t depressed by a lack of material goods, or “puffed up by their abundance.” They follow Christ who was humble, and thus are not obsessed with “empty honors.” Compelled by the Spirit who dwells within them, all can readily take up their cross and follow after Him. In short all are empowered to seek perfection as Jesus lays it down in the Beatitudes.

The law of love is the key to unlocking the mystery of law, freedom, and perfection. Christ has given us a new commandment, that we love one another (Jn. 13:34). It is an “inner law” for only in the Spirit who has been given to us can we love as Christ commands. Dwelling within us, He sets us free from sin and death; in Him the just demands of the law are fulfilled (cf. Rom. 8:2, 4). In Him the rich young man’s dilemma is solved, and we need not go away sad. “In Christ” the Holy Spirit is given to us as gift. Thus “in Christ” are we saved.

### Reflection

Reflect on the following questions and then discuss them in your group.

* Is Christian morality governed by “observance of the law” or by the “law of love”—loving God and your neighbor as yourself? What do you think?
* What do you think about the insight, “Jesus tells us we are to love God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Love implies proper relationships. God’s law spells out what those relationships should look like. One who loves embraces them willingly.”
* “One who lives by love is not content with the minimum or with living on the fringe.” “It is easy to speak of the law of love. But is it possible to actually live it? Is it possible to go beyond the minimum?” What do you believe?
* “The law of love is the key to unlocking the mystery of law, freedom, and perfection. Christ has given us a new commandment, that we love one another (John 13:34). It is an ‘inner law’ for only in the Spirit who has been given to us can we love as Christ commands. Dwelling within us, He sets us free from sin and death; in Him the just demands of the law are fulfilled (cf. Rom. 8:2, 4). In Him the rich young man’s dilemma is solved, and we need not go away sad. ‘In Christ’ the Holy Spirit is given to us as gift. Thus ‘in Christ’ are we saved.”
* What does this mean to you?
* What are the implications for our understanding of Christian morality?
* What is the role of the law in Christian morality?
* What difference do the author’s insights make in the way you live your life?

### The First Three Commandments

Read the following texts on The First Table of the Law and From Theory to Practice.

#### The First Tablet of the Law

Some might notice two major obstacles when they try to apply the directives of the first three commandments to their own personal lives. They are *remote* and they foster *legalism*.

In the first place, they are remote. We often don’t think of ourselves as violating the first two commandments because we aren’t atheists or agnostics or devil-worshippers. We don’t blaspheme or make false oaths. The offenses against these commandments seem so remote. (“I haven’t despaired of God’s mercy lately. I haven’t set up any false idols in my back parlor. I have no doubt that God exists and I pray to Him frequently—well, fairly frequently.”)

As for *legalism*, some Christians might think that the third commandment, to “keep holy the Sabbath day,” lends itself to that tendency in a special way. Worshipping God every Sunday and refraining from manual labor are presented as sheer duty. Didn’t Jesus Himself say, “The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath” (Mk. 2:27)?

How do these commandments speak to today’s Christian who is truly intent on following Jesus’ way of love and freedom? A good place to seek an answer is Mark 12:32-33. The story is well known. One of the scribes comes up to Jesus and asks what is the greatest commandment. Jesus replies that love of God is the greatest and the second is love of neighbor. To which the Scribe replies, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one and beside him there is no other’; and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself’,--this is much more important than all the burnt-offerings and sacrifices.” (Mk. 12:32-33).

In this brief passage one gets a glimpse into Jewish piety at its finest. To this scribe, the first, second, and third commandments were not mere laws written on stone. They were inscribed in his heart, and out of them came a piety and worldview which must have been the underlying motive for everything he did in his day-to-day life, whether praying in the synagogue, doing business with his neighbor, arranging his priorities, or questioning an itinerant preacher.

The same attitude should govern our approach to the first tablet of the Ten Commandments. If we examine ourselves in light of our “underlying attitude,” perhaps we might have more to think about when we examine our conscience in this area of God’s law.

### From Theory to Practice

Keeping the commandments involves more than avoiding infractions. As mentioned above, it involves an underlying attitude that governs all we do each day.

Consider, for example, the first commandment which in shortened form declares: “I am the Lord thy God. You shall have no other Gods before me.” While very few of us might have a household idol hidden away in our back parlor, can we also say that the Lord is the only one we truly love and serve? Or is it possible that we are guilty of more subtle forms of idolatry? Does our attachment to material things, or the attainment of the good life, or career advancement sometimes compromise our commitment to the Lord our God?

To whom does our heart belong? What are the most important things in our life? If God, the desire of our heart, is really He whom we regard as the Most High, would the expression, “Oh God,” or “Oh my God,” slip out of our mouths so often and so carelessly? If Jesus, who looks into the heart, were to hear us recite the greatest commandment, would he tell us that we are “not far” from the kingdom of God?

What about the third commandment? For many of us, it is merely a command. “God,” or perhaps “the Bible,” or “the church” says one must go to Sunday worship and that is why we have the Sunday observance.

Even more problematic is the observance of Sunday rest. In our economy driven society Sunday is “business as usual” for many businesses and services. If a person doesn’t have to work in his or her place of employment, he often devotes the day to household or yard work, or activities which are almost as strenuous as one’s job. To speak of “Sunday rest” seems outdated at best. Some might even wonder if the law still applies.

Drawing on both the Old Testament, particularly the opening chapters of Genesis, and the New Testament, we can see emerge a “theology of the Lord’s Day.” Let’s look again to the scribe whom Jesus commended. For it will force us to ask, “What resides most deeply in my heart? Are my weekend activities so important to me that I don’t have time to spend one hour with the believing community in offering my adoration and praise to the Lord, whom (I say ) I love above all else?” Or do I? Are my projects so important and pressing, that I can’t take out a little time on Sunday to rest and even spend time with the Lord? Where is my heart? Perhaps what we actually do on Sunday answers that question more tellingly than what we say.

A consideration of observing the Lord’s Day is a good place to conclude for it brings us round to where we began. What must I do to be saved? Keep the commandments, Jesus tells us, but the commandments transformed by the love, which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is precisely in keeping the Lord’s Day by celebrating His death and resurrection on Sunday, where we too are transformed from within and empowered to love God and neighbor and thereby become ever more perfect observers of the Law.

### Reflection

Reflect on your practice of the first three commandments using the following activity.

### Who Is First in Your Life?

*The First Commandment: I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.*

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:2-6)

**Imagine and Discuss**

Can we say that the Lord is the only one we truly love and serve?

Everybody has a god—in the sense that everyone puts something first in his or her life. It could be God, the creator and father of all. It could also be another person, money, power, status, prestige, self, career, material goods, attainment of the “good life,” and so forth. There must be something in your life which operates as your source of meaning and strength, something which you regard as the most important priority in your life.

Discuss the following questions:

* What would it mean if money or the “attainment of the good life” was your god? What would you be most concerned about in life? How would you act?
* What would it mean if prestige or status was your god? What would you be most concerned about in life? How would you act?
* What would it mean if your career or job was your god? What would you be most concerned about in life? How would you act?
* What would it mean if power was your god? What would you be most concerned about in life? How would you act?

**Personal Reflection**

What would it mean if God was first in your life? Consider…

* We show our love of God by taking our responsibilities toward God seriously and giving Him our highest priority in life.
* We spend time in prayer.
* We are grateful to God for all the gifts we enjoy and demonstrate this in our prayer and our generosity towards others.
* We believe in God’s great love for us and all humanity.

**How do you live the first commandment now? How can you live it more fully?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| How do you live the first commandment?  | How can you live the first commandment? |
|  |  |

#### How Do We Speak about God?

*The Second Commandment: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.*

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. (Exodus 20:7)

**Imagine and Discuss**

Discuss the following questions:

* What does it say about our love of God when we disrespect God through words or gestures of malice, hostility, or dishonor?
* What does it say about our lives when we fail to speak the truth? When we make a promise under oath, with God as a witness, and either do not intend to keep it or simply fail to do so?

**Personal Reflection**

What would it mean if you showed respect for God’s name? Consider…

* Our speech reflects a sense of the sacred and witnesses to our love for God.
* We speak reverentially about God and his creatures and contribute greatly to the spirit of holiness without which our world could not survive.

**How do you live the second commandment now? How can you live it more fully?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| How do you live the second commandment?  | How can you live the second commandment? |
|  |  |

#### How Do We Keep Sunday Holy?

*The Third Commandment: Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day.*

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. (Exodus 20:8-11)

**Imagine and Discuss**

Discuss the following questions:

* What would life be like without rest?
* What does it say about our love of God if we do not take time to praise, give thanks, and acknowledge God regularly through the community’s gathering at Sunday worship?

**Personal Reflection**

What would it mean if you kept holy the Lord’s day? Consider…

* We gather with the Christian community at Sunday worship.
* We rest and avoid unnecessary work on Sunday that would hinder us from the spiritual observance of the Lord’s day.
* We spend time enjoying our family, performing a work of service, taking part in church activities.

**How do you live the third commandment now? How can you live it more fully?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| How do you live the second commandment?  | How can you live the second commandment? |
|  |  |

### How Can the Commandments Speak to Today’s Christians?

Read aloud the following Scripture passage from the Gospel of Mark and the commentary below.

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, ‘Which commandment is the first of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The first is, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 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.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’ Then the scribe said to him, ‘You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that “he is one, and beside him there is no other”; and “to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength”, and “to love one’s neighbor as oneself”,—this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.’ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ After that no one dared to ask him any question. (Mark 12:28-34)

Reflecting on the passage from the Gospel of Mark, the author writes: “one gets a glimpse into Jewish piety at its finest. To this scribe, the first, second, and third commandments were not mere laws written on stone. They were inscribed in his heart, and out of them came a piety and worldview which must have been the underlying motive for everything he did in his day-to-day life, whether praying in the synagogue, doing business with his neighbor, arranging his priorities, or questioning an itinerant preacher.

The same attitude should govern our approach to the first tablet of the Ten Commandments. If we examine ourselves in light of our “underlying attitude,” perhaps we might have more to think about when we examine our conscience in this area of God’s law.

Take several minutes for personal reflection to integrate your learning from this session using the following questions:

* How are the first three commandments inscribed on your heart and the underlying motive for everything you do each day?
* What specific actions will you take to live the first three commandments more fully in your life?

Share insights from the two reflection questions with your group. Give each person in the group time to share his or her reflections without interruptions or discussion.

## Closing Prayer Service

### Preparation

Collect the prayer petitions from each table.

Select several people who will read the prayer petitions.

### Gather

Let us conclude this session with the words of Jesus from the end of the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus reminds us that it is wise person who hears the Word of God and acts on it. It is like a person who builds a house on a solid foundation so it can withstand the storms of nature.

### Listen

A reading from Matthew 6:24-27:

‘Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!’

### Respond

Introduce the prayer petitions by saying:

Let us pray now for the strength to build our house, our moral life, on the solid foundation of God’s commandments. Our response to each prayer petition is:

**Lord God, help us live the Commandments.**

Have each reader take turns reading one prayer petition.

### Go Forth