

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 43

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 43: *What is the preface to the Ten Commandments?*

ANSWER: The preface to the Ten Commandments is in these words, "I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

QUESTION 44: *What doth the preface to the Ten Commandments teach us?*

ANSWER: The preface to the Ten Commandments teacheth us, That because God is the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments.

MONDAY

Praise: Sing Psalm 136A

Scripture: Read Exodus 20:1-2; Deuteronomy 5:1-6

Key Thought: *The Ten Commandments have an introduction.*

Questions:

- ☞ What is a covenant?
- ☞ Who initiates covenants between God and men? Why is this so?
- ☞ What do we learn about God from the fact that He enters into covenant with sinful men?

Prayer

Notes: Throughout the Scriptures, the moral law as summarized in the Ten Commandments is referred to as a covenant. A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties, in which promises are made in exchange for specific blessings, and penalties result if those promises are broken. In addition to the promises and penalties, there are certain other features common to most covenants, by which they can be identified. One of the features common to most covenants is a preface. This is an opening statement that identifies the one whose authority validates the covenant and names the parties involved. When God enters into a covenant with man, He is always the One who must initiate the agreement. Sinful man is in no position to bargain with the Holy God. In the preface to the Ten Commandments we can see the authority of God, who initiates the covenant. We can also see His wonderful condescension, as the Almighty God of all creation stoops down to enter into an agreement with sinful men.



TUESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 136A

Scripture: Read Exodus 3:1-14

Key Thought: *God introduces Himself as “the LORD.”*

Questions:

- ☪ By what name did God make Himself known to Moses?
- ☪ What does He mean when He calls Himself “I AM”?
- ☪ What does this name, used in the preface to the ten commandments, tell us about the law of God?
- ☪ What does it tell us about our responsibility?

Prayer

Notes: The preface to the ten commandments begins with these words: “I am the LORD.” God identifies Himself here by His most holy covenant name—the same name by which He made Himself known to Moses at the burning bush when He said, “I AM WHO I AM.” This name, when it appears in the Bible, is sometimes translated “Jehovah” or “Yahweh,” both of which are transliterations, or attempts to sound out the Hebrew word for “I AM.” Most often, this name appears as it does in the preface to the ten commandments—as the word LORD (with all four letters capitalized). By revealing Himself in this way, God emphasizes His absolute sovereignty and self-sufficiency. As God, He does not depend upon anything outside of Himself. Nor was He created or brought into being—He simply *is*. This name shows us the awesome nature of God. The name “Yahweh” was considered so holy and awesome to the Jews that they wouldn’t even dare to speak it out loud. Instead, when they came to a place in the Law where the name “Yahweh” was used, they substituted the word “Adonai,” which means “Lord.” By using His most holy covenant name in the preface to the ten commandments, God alerts us to the fact that what follows is the word of the Supreme Lawgiver and He has every right to demand our obedience and to punish our disobedience.



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 136A

Scripture: Read Exodus 6:1-7

Key Thought: *God introduces Himself as the LORD “thy God.”*

- ☪ What do we learn from the words “thy God” in the preface to the ten commandments?
- ☪ How does the Lord become your God?
- ☪ What do the words “thy God” tell us about our duty?
- ☪ How can we know that God is our God?

Prayer

Notes: In the preface to the ten commandments, God not only reveals Himself by the awesome words, “I am the LORD” but also adds this wonderful modifier: “your God.” Thomas Watson writes, “Had He called Himself Jehovah only, it might have terrified us, and made us flee from Him; but when He says, ‘thy God,’ it allures and draws us to Him” (commentary on the *Catechism*). These two little words contain all the glorious beauty of the gospel itself, for the holy God of heaven only becomes “the LORD your God” to any man through the redeeming work of Christ. In this part of the preface to the ten commandments we are reminded that God reveals His law to us because He loves us with a personal love and has delighted to call Himself “our God” and count us to be “His people.” It is a truth most glorious and full of encouragement for the child of God that He has willingly drawn near and made Himself and all His benefits ours. These words also remind us that our duty is to receive the commandments that follow this preface as the ordinances of the One who has claimed us for His own. By walking in His commandments we demonstrate to men and angels that He is our God and we are His people.



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 136A

Scripture: Read Deuteronomy 5:1-6; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Key Thought: *God makes Himself known through deliverance.*

Questions:

- ☞ By what prior act does God identify Himself in the preface to the ten commandments?
- ☞ By saying, “out of the land of Egypt,” what were they to remember?
- ☞ By saying, “out of the house of bondage,” what were they to recall?
- ☞ Why did God remind them of their freedom before giving them His law?

Prayer

Notes: God makes Himself known in the preface to the ten commandments, not only by His wonderful names, but also by His remarkable deliverances. By reminding the people of His awesome acts of redemption, He put them in mind of their debt to Him who had accomplished such great things for them. In the words, “which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt,” the people were to remember the powerful demonstrations they had seen as the true and living God triumphed over the false gods of Pharaoh and his people. The words “out of the land of Egypt” refer to the power that had oppressed and enslaved them. In crushing that power, God had demonstrated that the gods of the Egyptians were nothing and that no power on earth or in heaven or under the earth could separate His people from their deliverer. In the words, “out of the house of bondage,” they were reminded of the condition from which they were deliv-

ered—having been bound in the shackles of slavery. Their freedom was purchased by the Lord, and they became His by right of redemption who had been His by right of creation. Before giving them the law, then, God reminds them of their former bondage, knowing the tendency of sinners to view God’s covenant boundaries as slavish regulations and heavy burdens. Twice James refers to the moral law as the “Law of Liberty”—indicating that by it God sets us free from bondage to sin and death. Likewise, we are reminded through the gospel, “you are not your own...you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Cor. 6:19-20)



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 136A

Scripture: Read Luke 1:68-75

Key Thought: *God’s greatness and goodness promote obedience.*

Questions:

- ☞ What three things does God show us in the this preface?
- ☞ How do each of these things show us God’s greatness?
- ☞ How do these things inspire us to obey Him?

Prayer

Notes: Question 44 of the *Shorter Catechism* summarizes the content of the preface to the Ten Commandments—that in it God reveals Himself as (1) the LORD, (2) our God, and (3) our Redeemer. The application drawn from these things is that we are “therefore bound to keep all His commandments.” We are bound to keep His commandments because of His awesome nature as the LORD, who has every right to demand obedience from His creatures. We are bound to keep His commandments because He is our God, who had first loved us and drawn near to us in mercy and love, binding Himself to us for our good. We are bound to keep His commandments because He is our Redeemer, who has demonstrated His power over the kingdom of Satan and brought us out of the bondage of sin and death through His Son Jesus Christ. All of these things—the holiness of God, the goodness of God, and the redeeming grace of God—are powerful incentives to walk in His commandments as an expression of love for the One who first loved us.



Note: Only five lessons per week are included. You are encouraged to lead your family in worship seven days a week. On weekends, you may want to review or build upon the lessons from the previous week, discuss the sermon from Sunday morning, or work on questions from the Catechism or memory verses. These lesson suggestions are intended to provide a simple framework for parents to build upon. You are not limited to this content. The habit of morning and evening family worship is the biblical ideal. We hope you can use these lessons as a starting point for the development of a blessed practice of family worship in your home.