

Words for Living

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) received by Moses on Mt Sinai as he leads the people of Israel from slavery to freedom, reveals the dynamics of living life abundantly, and shapes a community. A summary of the Law will resonate in the silence of the desert journey (Psalm 19), while Matthew and the letter to the Philippians speak of the spirit of the law as given by Jesus.

Focus scripture: Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20

Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20 after escaping Egypt, where they had lived as slaves, a pillar of cloud guided the people of Israel during the day and a pillar of fire during the night. They had crossed the Sea of Reeds after the waters had parted miraculously and then closed again after they had crossed. Further, when they had no water, Moses, under direction from God, struck the rock with his staff and produced a flow of water.

As we enter this week's story, we find Moses and the people at Mount Sinai, where Moses is affirmed as God's spokesperson. Exodus 19 sets the stage for God's delivery of the Ten Commandments.

The original form and Hebrew language in Exodus 20 suggest that the commandments first may have been simply a list of ten words – murder, idolatry, adultery, and so on. These words were shorthand for a rule of life to guide the people of Israel along their journey to becoming the nation promised to Abraham.

The Ten Commandments summarize God's rules for living. In the first commandment, we are told to acknowledge God as God alone and are called to honour our relationship with God. In the commandment regarding Sabbath, we are told to match the rhythm of our lives with God's rhythm. In the remaining commandments, God's loving words lays out how to live so that our relationships with other people reflect God's relationship with us.

Protestant theologian Martin Luther (1483–1546) taught that every negative in this list implies a positive. For example, "do not kill" implies "support the living." The Ten Commandments offer a God-vision of the world.

The Ten Commandments are sometimes referred to in scripture as God's law or the Law of Moses. They form the cornerstone of Israelite society. All were called to obey these concrete expressions of God's wisdom

and will, regardless of occupation or social class. In the Hebrew Scriptures, "the law" also refers to all of the cultural knowledge that one generation passes on to another. Later, the term Torah is used to refer to the Law – encompassing the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures – combined with the Talmud, commentaries on God's law.

Verses 18–20 tell how the people of Israel tremble in fear at creation's witness to holy power – "thunder and lightning, sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking." They plead with Moses to be their mediator, to relay the words of God to them and to carry their words to God. Moses accepts this role.

The psalmist of Psalm 19 extols the Creator's "ordinances": "more to be desired are they than gold...sweeter also than honey." God's loving wisdom sustains the community of creation and brings joy and purpose to all who live within it.

In Philippians 3:4b–14, Paul claims the wisdom and joy of being grounded in Christ. When Paul speaks of "confidence in the flesh," he refers to those things that give people "credit" in the world's eyes. In his accounting metaphor, Paul counts these as a loss. There can be only one item on the credit side: Christ.

Jesus' parable in Matthew 21:33–46 seems a word of sobering wisdom. Rather than accepting the challenge of such wisdom, the leaders turn on Jesus. They find no joy in God's wisdom, embodied in Jesus the Christ.

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This week's readings offer a glimpse of a world where all patterns of human living are grounded in God's loving wisdom. As we continue to flourish as a community of God's people, such wisdom shapes our life together. As we journey toward fuller participation in God's purpose – as an individual and as a church – what words for living do we offer and receive?



Focus scripture
Exodus 20:1–4,
7–9, 12–20

Additional scriptures
Psalm 19
Philippians 3:4b–14
Matthew 21:33–46



Seasons of the Spirit
is based on semi-
continuous readings of the
Revised Common Lectionary.

**Holy God, immerse
us in the river of
your word and
ways and carry
us on a journey
of growth as a
community of your
people. Increase
our resolve to
heed your loving
wisdom and to
rejoice in your
promise of new life
as we do. Amen.**

Lesson Connection
links current events
with this week's
scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and
click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

The next four weeks will continue the focus on stories from the Hebrew scriptures.

In this week's session, children hear the story of Moses receiving the "Ten Commandments." While this may not yet be familiar for all of the children in the group, they are aware of rules for behaviour. Rules can be a lifeline for children because rules provide structure for their lives. Schools will have rules that guide classroom studies and playground activities. Most families also have expectations and guidelines for

behaviour. Sometimes children will point out when rules are applied unevenly or complain when someone else is taking advantage of a situation. They notice deviations from the norm, whether during a family dinner or a game on the school playground. But they will recognize being part of communities shaped by specific rules.

Pray that you will embody the loving ways of God as you introduce the children to the Ten Commandments and help them understand how these give shape to community.

Prepare

Before the session

- ☐ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 35).
- ☐ Set a worship space with green cloth, white pillar candle, offering basket, Bible with bookmark in focus passage, and basket of green, flat-bottomed glass stones.
- ☐ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* and *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 9), CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ☐ Bring, if possible, the song "Come, Holy Spirit" (p. 12 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #13 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

Engage

- ☐ Bring resource sheet "[On the Mountain](#)."
- ☐ **Activity group:** no additional materials needed

- ☐ **Research group:** copies of resource sheet "[Ten Commandments](#)"

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ☐ **Story zone:** sheets of paper, used magazines, book binder or folder
- ☐ **Quiet zone:** copies of resource sheet "[Ten Ways to Love Earth](#)"
- ☐ **Art zone:** mural paper
- ☐ **Craft zone:** rectangles of brightly coloured felt, straight pins, fabric paints, wooden chopsticks or thin dowelling, yarn or ribbon
- ☐ **Community zone:** no additional materials needed

Bless

- ☐ Bring, if possible, song "As Long As We Follow/*Na Nzela Na Lola*" (p. 25 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #17 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).



Words for Living

Scripture

Exodus 20:1–4,
7–9, 12–20

FOCUS To discover how the Ten Commandments help us to live in God's way

Gather

Welcome the children. Introduce any newcomers to the group and share experiences from the past week.

Opening ritual

Gather in the worship space and point out the green cloth. Explain that we have returned to the Season after Pentecost, a time when we continue to learn about what it means to love and follow God's ways.

Lead the group in the following litany:

Leader: We are on a journey and
God's light goes with us.
(Invite a child to light the candle.)
God's Spirit is deep inside and all around,
helping us as we learn and grow.

(Invite children to place glass stones in a spiral leading out from the candle.)
God breathes love into everything.

All: Thank you, God!

Sing or listen to, if possible, the song "Come, Holy Spirit" (p. 12 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #13 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9); if singing the song, choose several verses to focus on this week.

Pray *(Invite children to repeat each line after you.)*

Loving God, thank you
for each person here.
May we feel you with us, as we learn
about your loving ways. Amen.

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Explain that there are rules that we follow at home, church, school, or in the neighbourhood. Invite the children to share a rule with the rest of the group, such as brush your teeth after a meal or look both ways before crossing the street. After each rule, ask:

- **How did you learn about this rule?**
- **What might happen if no one followed this rule?**

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship area and use the bookmark to open it to the book of Exodus.

Explain that this book contains many stories about the Hebrew people who made the long journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom. Moses was the person who was called by God to lead the people on this journey. This week's story tells about when the Hebrew people learned more about living in God's loving ways. In church today we often call these ways the Ten Commandments.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "[On the Mountain](#)," based on **Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20**, to tell the story.

Wondering Review the list of commandments again and invite discussion on the following questions:

- **Which of these ways of living help us to love God?**
- **Which are the commandments that can help us to love others?**

Exploring the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Activity group *(for younger children)* This group will have the opportunity to portray each of the commandments using their bodies. Review the ten loving ways again from the resource sheet "[On the Mountain](#)." Pause after reading each one for children to show with their bodies what each loving way could look like. Have them hold their poses for a few seconds each time so all can see.

Research group *(for older children)* This group will learn more about the Ten Commandments by comparing translations. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Ten Commandments](#)" and read aloud together. Explain that this is a paraphrase (rewritten in simpler language) that can help us understand these commandments. Ask them to find **Exodus 20** in their Bibles and look up each reference listed

on the resource sheet. If time permits, ask group members to each choose one of the commandments and write it in their own words. Share these as a whole group.

Reporting Invite the activity group to show a few of their poses and invite the research group to share what they have learned and, if possible, to share some of their own rewritten commandments.

The Bible story and us

Following God's loving ways was important to the people of Israel and can guide the way we live today. Ask:

- **Which of the commandments do you think are the easiest to follow? Why?**
- **Which ones do you think are the hardest? Why?**
- **How do you think the Ten Commandments help us to live more fairly with one another?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- ❑ **Story zone: Group book** *(Option: ongoing project)* The Ten Commandments help us love God and others. Give each child a sheet of paper. Encourage them to look through magazines for pictures that show loving actions being performed and create a collage of these images by gluing them on to cover their papers. Have them write their names on the back of their pages and place them together in a binder to form the first chapter of their storybook. Encourage children to look at the book regularly.

- ❑ **Quiet zone: Word puzzle** *(for younger children)* As Moses shared the Ten Commandments, we can also share ideas of ways we can become a more loving community. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Ten Ways to Love Earth](#)" and follow the instructions for solving the puzzle and writing the prayer. (Answer: May we live the way of love. Amen.) Talk about how group members have each loved Earth in one of these ways. What would they add to the list? Say the prayer together.



- ❑ **Art zone: Mural** Invite children to create a group mural showing what their community might be like if everyone lived in God's way and treated each other fairly. Review the list on the resource sheet "[Ten Commandments](#)" and invite children to choose one or more of these statements to illustrate on a sheet of mural paper. Have them choose a title for their mural and display in the church hall.
- ❑ **Craft zone: Wall hangings** The Ten Commandments would help God's people to live together more fairly. Distribute felt pieces and copies of the words in the text box on the resource sheet "[On the Mountain](#)." Have them decorate the paraphrase of the commandments and pin it to the middle of their felt rectangles. Invite them to use fabric paints to decorate around the edges and print the title "God's Loving Ways" at the top of the felt pieces, leaving enough room to turn the top edge over and staple around a chopstick or piece of dowelling. Tie a length of yarn or ribbon to each end to make a hanger and encourage them to hang these up in their rooms at home.

- ❑ **Community zone: Rap** The Ten Commandments are something that many people have memorized over the years. Invite children to learn these commandments by heart by creating short versions of each one and setting them to a rhythm. Work together to rewrite each commandment; for example, the first one could be shortened to “God is our God.” Write

these on newsprint or chalkboard and then say together, adding hand claps for words and syllables. Gather speed until the whole group has developed a rhythm together. Keep repeating until group members can say their rap smoothly without consulting the written list.

Bless

Gather around the worship area and light the candle again.

Sing or listen to, if possible, the song “As Long As We Follow/*Na Nzela Na Lola*” (p. 25 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #17 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

Blessing Lead the group in the following litany of blessing, inviting children to repeat the last line after you:

Let’s go out into the world
remembering God’s loving and wise ways.

God is with us. Amen.

Reflect

How did the children show signs of understanding the Ten Commandments and how these rules can help us live in God’s way? How might you continue to create a loving space of welcome and learning?



ON THE MOUNTAIN

based on Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, and 12–20

**Raise your voice close to a shout
when you describe the
thunder and
lightning.**

Moses was a leader chosen by God. God selected Moses and his brother Aaron to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt where they had been slaves for the Egyptians for many years. Moses told the people that God had not forgotten them and that God wanted them to be free. Moses told them that God would be with them. And God was.

With God's help, Moses led the people across a big sea. When they were thirsty, God told Moses how to find water. When Moses told God that the people were hungry, God sent quail and manna for them to eat. God was always with them, during the day as they walked through the wilderness and at night when they rested.

But the people didn't always remember that God was with them. Freedom was new to them and they didn't know how to live and work together without the Egyptian slave masters telling them what to do. They blamed Moses when things went wrong. They even said, "You have brought us out here to die!"

Finally, Moses had had enough. He climbed a mountain so he could be alone with God. Moses and God had to decide what to do with these people. God said, "Remind the people that I freed them from slavery. If they keep my covenant, I will treasure them as a holy nation."

So Moses went down the mountain and told the people what God had said. He told them to spend three days getting ready to meet with God.

They washed their clothes and did all they could to get ready to meet with God. But on the morning of the third day, thunder roared, lightning flashed, and trumpets blasted. The people trembled. A thick cloud covered the top of the mountain. The people waited at the bottom of the mountain while Moses went to speak with God. God spoke to Moses in thunder. The people waited.

This is what God said to Moses:

Know that I am the Holy One, the powerful One.
Follow my ways, instead of following after
the things you like or want.
Be careful how you use my name, whether you
are speaking in anger or in joy.
I rested when I finished Creation. Follow
my example and rest on the seventh day of
each week. Keep that day holy.
Pay attention to your parents and other
adults who love you.
Keep my creation, all of it, healthy and alive.
Be loving in all your relationships.
Be happy with what you have, rather than take
from others.
Tell the truth.
Be happy that others have what they have.

The thunder and lightning frightened the people. They called to Moses, "You speak with God and tell us what God says. We are too afraid." So Moses went to the top of the mountain to speak more with God. And the people waited.



Ten Commandments

based on Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, and 12–20

Know that I am the Holy One, the powerful One. (See Exodus 20:2–3.)

Follow my ways, instead of following after the things you like or want.
(See Exodus 20:4.)

Be careful how you use my name, whether you are speaking in anger or in joy. (See Exodus 20:7.)

I rested when I finished Creation. Follow my example and rest on the seventh day of the week. Keep that day holy. (See Exodus 20:8.)

Pay attention to your parents and other adults who love you.
(See Exodus 20:12.)

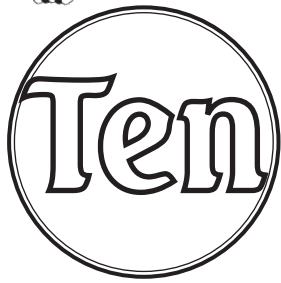
Keep my creation, all of it, healthy and alive. (See Exodus 20:13.)

Be loving in all relationships. (See Exodus 20:14.)

Be happy with what you have, rather than take from others.
(See Exodus 20:15.)

Tell the truth. (See Exodus 20:16.)

Be happy that others have what they have. (See Exodus 20:17.)



Ways to Love Earth

Use the code below to fill in the letters and discover ten ways you can love Earth.

Code:

1 - A	2 - B	3 - C	4 - D
5 - E	6 - F	7 - G	8 - H
9 - I	10 - J	11 - K	12 - L
13 - M	14 - N	15 - O	16 - P
17 - Q	18 - R	19 - S	20 - T
21 - U	22 - V	23 - W	24 - X
25 - Y	26 - Z		

Prayer

Complete the prayer below by using the letters in the circles.

May we live _____

_____ of

_____ .

Amen.

1. Plant _____ as gifts to loved ones.

20 18 5 5 19

2. Turn off the _____ when not in use.

12 9 7 8 20 19

3. Get to know _____ around you.

14 1 20 21 18 5

4. Use _____ carefully.

23 1 20 5 18

5. _____ or ride your bike when possible.

23 1 12 11

6. Reduce the amount of stuff you _____

2 21 25

7. _____ what you can.

18 5 3 25 3 12 5

8. Reuse _____ things in new ways.

15 12 4

9. _____ outgrown toys and clothes away.

7 9 22 5

10. Play _____ when you can.

15 21 20 19 9 4 5