

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: October 8, 2017
Lesson Title: "Commanded"
Lesson Passage: Exodus 20:1-17

ABOUT THIS LESSON

This lesson features a review of the Ten Commandments, as given in Exodus 20:1-17.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

- (1) Recite each of the Ten Commandments in order.
- (2) Briefly explain the meaning of each commandment.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

It probably would be fair to say that the Ten Commandments are some of the most stoutly defended, but least known, documents available to the American public. A few years ago, in a survey taken in a state legislature where the right to display the Ten Commandments had been strongly defended, most of the politicians surveyed could not name more than half of the commandments. In a study conducted by Kelton Research in 2007, 80% of the respondents (all Americans) knew the ingredients of McDonald's Big Mac sandwich, while only 60% knew that "Thou shalt not kill" was one of the Ten Commandments, 34% could not recall the commandment, "Remember the sabbath" and 29% did not know there was a commandment that said "do not make any false idols." Yet, the basic principles imbedded in Israel's ancient law code have profoundly influenced our own legal system and have served as a guide to personal conduct through many generations.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

Lead a brief discussion of each of the Ten Commandments:

NO OTHER GODS (Exod. 20:3): The Israelites were surrounded by polytheistic cultures, where numerous gods were worshiped. Literally, the first commandment reads, "You shall have no other gods over against me." **APPLICATION:** Sometimes, even Christians blunder into the heresy that ascribes unlimited power to Satan, setting up a "good God vs. a bad god" dualism, thus violating the first commandment.

AVOID IDOLATRY (Exod. 20:4): This commandment originally prohibited images made of wood or stone; but false gods can also be fashioned in the mind. **APPLICATION:** A person can even sit in church and worship an "imagined" god, rather than the God revealed by study of the Bible.

DON'T TAKE GOD'S NAME IN VAIN (Exod. 20:7): Originally, this was not a prohibition against profanity (i.e., "cussin"); rather, it forbade any insincere use of God's name, such as using the name of God in oath-taking, in order to be more convincing. **QUESTION:** Isn't attributing one's own thoughts to God ("God told me thus and so") a violation of this commandment?

KEEP THE SABBATH HOLY (Exod. 20:8): The Sabbath day means literally, "day of rest." "Keep it holy" means "keep it separated from the others." It is a day for focusing the mind and heart on God. For the Hebrews, the Sabbath, on Saturday, was a weekly reminder of the Passover. For Christians, the Sabbath is Sunday, a reminder of the Resurrection.

HONOR YOUR PARENTS (Exod. 20:12): Contrary to popular belief, this commandment was directed not to children, but to adults, reminding them to care for aging parents who could no longer function without assistance. APPLICATION: Any form of elder abuse or neglect violates this command.

YOU SHALL NOT KILL (Exod. 20:13): Strictly speaking, the Ten Commandments state general principles, rather than laying down detailed regulations. This commandment is a case in point. It leaves many questions unanswered, questions related to issues like capital punishment, abortion, hunger, war, euthanasia, drunk driving, and careless dumping of hazardous wastes. APPLICATION: The basic issue here is respect for human life. Whatever diminishes or threatens life violates the spirit of this commandment.

ADULTERY IS FORBIDDEN (Exod. 20:14): Sexual relations must be confined to the marriage union. APPLICATION: While this command probably was taken to express the male point of view in ancient times, when wives were thought to be the property of their husbands, the interpretations of Jesus and Paul have hallowed it as a rock-bed foundation of Christian family life.

DON'T STEAL (Exod. 20:15): The Bible warns against obsessive accumulation of riches and condemns greed, but it never negates the principle of private property. This command rests on that principle. APPLICATION: Christians should balance the right to own property with the biblical mandate to practice generosity (*refer to Deut. 15:7-8 and Matt. 5:42*).

DON'T LIE (Exod. 20:16): This commandment originally forbade giving false testimony in court, but many other biblical passages (e.g., Jer. 9:5; Prov. 12:19, 14:25; Eph. 4:15,25) justify broadening its meaning to "Be honest, tell the truth."

DO NOT COVET (Exod. 20:17): "Your neighbor's house" in this verse actually means "your neighbor's household." It includes everything mentioned in the rest of the verse (wife, servants, farm animals, everything else). To "covet" is to harbor attitudes that eventually lead to the sins named in commandments 6, 7, 8 and 9. APPLICATION: Rather than striving so hard to have what you want, ask the Lord to help you want what you have.

CLOSING THE LESSON

To review the Ten Commandments, invite class members to paraphrase them in their own words. EXAMPLES: "Watch your mouth." "Don't take what isn't yours." "Tell the truth, even if it hurts."

L. Coleman PO Box 2951, Weatherford TX 76086 <luciencoleman@gmail.com>