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Exodus 19

"Introduction to the Ten Commandments"

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This study guide will be the first of eleven in Pastor Gary's teaching series on the Ten Commandments. Each week, in consecutive order, he will focus on one Commandment.

Historically, Exodus 19 begins with the Israelites having arrived at the base of Mt. Sinai. God gave the people what we know as the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. The Hebrew for Ten Commandments is aseret ha'davarim, which means, the ten words or the ten utterances. The Greek translation would be deca (ten) logoi (words) or The Decalogue.

The Ten Commandments have been, without a doubt, the most influential document regarding human culture, in general, and upon American culture in particular – framing both the social and legal foundation of our American society. Supreme Court Associate Justice William Rehnquist,¹ writing in the dissent for the 1980 case, *Stone v. Graham*,² made this comment: "It is... undeniable... that the Ten Commandments have had a significant impact on the development of secular legal codes of the Western World."³

On February 15, 1950, President Harry S. Truman addressed the Attorneys General Conference. Among the attendees were men and women from the Department of Justice, the National Association of Attorneys, the U.S. Conference of Lawyers, and the National Institute of Municipal Law Officers. President Truman said, "The

¹ http://www.oyez.org/justices/william_h_rehnquist Note: William Rehnquist became the Supreme Court Chief Justice in 1986.

² http://www.oyez.org/cases/1980-1989/1980/1980_80_321#sort=vote
<http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/449/39/case.html>

³ <http://www.firstamendmentschools.org/freedoms/case.aspx?id=1422>

⁵ <http://www.americanminute.com/store/product.php?productid=20>

fundamental basis of this nation's laws was given to Moses on the Mount. The fundamental basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teachings we get from Exodus and St. Matthew, from Isaiah and St. Paul. I don't think we emphasize that enough these days. If we don't have a proper fundamental moral background, we will finally end up with a totalitarian government which does not believe in rights for anybody except the State!"⁴

In an interview on February 5, 1996, for *Human Events*, Margaret Thatcher, the first woman Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, made this comment on the Ten Commandments: "The Decalogue [Ten Commandments] are addressed to each and every person. This is the origin of our common humanity and of the sanctity of the individual. Each one has a duty to try to carry out those commandments... If you accept freedom, you've got to have principles about the responsibility. You can't do this without biblical foundation. Your Founding Fathers came over with that. They came over with the doctrines of the New Testament as well as the Old. They looked after one another, not only as a matter of necessity, but as a matter of duty to their God. There is no other country in the world which started that way."⁵ It's ironic that the very legal system that was built upon the Ten Commandments is now systematically chipping away at its own foundation through one court case after another.

One of the first court cases concerning the Ten Commandments was the now infamous 1980 U.S. Supreme Court case *Stone v. Graham*. In a 5-4 ruling, the Court ruled that posters of the Ten Commandments were to be removed from classrooms in Kentucky public schools. This happened despite the fact that they were clearly identified as historical displays, and that they were paid for by private contributions. The majority opinion argued that the display of the Commandments was unconstitutional because if they were "to have any effect at all, it would be to induce the schoolchildren to read, meditate upon, perhaps to venerate and obey, the Commandments."⁶

The fruit from decisions like these is evident in the classrooms of public schools all over the country. In 1940, public school teachers ranked the top seven disciplinary problems as being: talking out of turn, chewing gum, making noise, running in the hall, cutting in line, dress code violations, and littering.⁷ Seventy years later the list is completely

⁴ <http://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/viewpapers.php?pid=657>

⁵ http://books.google.com/books?id=5z-1K7M_mfwC&pg=PA295&lpg=PA295&dq=margaret+thatcher+They+looked+after+one+another,+not+only+as+a+matter+of+necessity,+but+as+a+matter+of+duty+to+their+God.++There+is+no+other+country+in+the+world+which+started+that+way.&source=bl&ots=4XOCDW2PAM&sig=FtRhsmFCipa3XIXqjMoVNemgym0&hl=en&sa=X&ei=R05jUlawJMHO0gGJIIDoAQ&ved=0CCAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=margaret%20thatcher%20They%20looked%20after%20one%20another%2C%20not%20only%20as%20a%20matter%20of%20necessity%2C%20but%20as%20a%20matter%20of%20duty%20to%20their%20God.%20%20There%20is%20no%20other%20country%20in%20the%20world%20which%20started%20that%20way.&f=false

⁶ <http://www.firstamendmentschools.org/freedoms/case.aspx?id=1422>

⁷ <http://reason.org/files/60b57eac352e529771bfa27d7d736d3f.pdf>

dissimilar, considering the major concerns of public school officials includes: drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse, theft, assault, verbal and physical abuse toward educators, rape and murder. As they say, “How’s that working out!”

Even though society and the courts may be disregarding the Ten Commandments more and more, they are still part of God’s timeless truth for mankind and, if no one else abides by them, at the very least, the church should. In this study we’ll learn that even though the Commandments are found in the Old Testament Law, they still have a place in our lives.

Three Divisions Of The Ten Commandments

1. Moral – Practices
 - a. Behavior and attitudes of the heart.

2. Ceremonial – Customs
 - a. Feasts, festivals, and the sacrificial system.
 - b. **Colossians 2:16-17** – *“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”*

3. Dietary – Food
 - a. What is clean and unclean?
 - b. **Mark 7:18-23** – *“ ‘Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.’ (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods ‘clean.’) He went on: ‘What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’ ”*

4. The ceremonial and dietary laws are no longer binding for Christians, however, Believers can choose to practice them for historical or health reasons.

5. Jesus elevated the moral aspect of the Law in the Sermon on the Mount.
 - a. **Matthew 5:21-22** – *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not murder’... but I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.’ ”*

- b. **Matthew 5:27-28** - *“You have heard it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.’ ”*
6. Today, even though we are under grace, the Lord doesn’t let us off the hook, because he not only embraced the moral code of the Law, he raised the bar!

The Ten Commandments Explain What Sin Is

7. **Romans 7:7** - *“... I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet.’ ”*

The Ten Commandments Expose Sin In Us

8. **Romans 3:20** - *“Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”*
9. **James 2:10** - *“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”*

The Ten Commandments Express Our Need For A Savior

10. **Galatians 3:24-25** - *“So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”*
- a. Paul used the language of the Greeks when he used the word pedagogue, a word that means, put in charge.
 - i. A pedagogue was a servant who escorted a child to and from school. He did nothing more than present the child to the teacher.
 - ii. In the same way, the Law hands us off to the Savior.
 - iii. Once we become aware of what sin is, and how sinful we are, it’s too overwhelming, and we understand that we don’t have the capacity to make right every wrong.

Summary Of The Ten Commandments

11. The Ten Commandments summarize God's moral code, and they apply to all people, at all times, in all places.
 - a. There are no exceptions to the moral code because it is an absolute versus a relative code.
 - b. They don't change because of the passage of time or a shift in cultural opinions.
 - c. They express God's moral standard for human behavior toward God and others.

12. There are differences between Jews, Catholics, and Protestants when it comes to numbering the Commandments.
 - a. The Jewish and Protestant numbering order for the Ten Commandments are very similar, in that #3 through #10 are the same.
 - i. The first two differ slightly in that what the Jews count as a command versus what Protestants consider a prologue to the Commandments.
 - b. The Catholic Church combines what Protestants consider #1 and #2 into one Commandment, and they divide what Protestants call #10 by making it into two Commandments (#9 and #10).

13. **Exodus 19** is a picture of preparation.
 - a. God instructed Moses to prepare the people to receive the Ten Commandments.
 - b. The timeline of **Exodus 19** shows Moses going up and down Mt. Sinai to get instructions from the Lord no fewer than three times.
 - i. The first time was a call to obedience. (**Exodus 19:3-6**)
 - ii. The second time was a call to holiness and holy living. (**Exodus 19:7-11**)
 - iii. The third time was a call to a holy respect and reverence for God. (**Exodus 19:20-22**)

14. One thing that is often overlooked is that God just didn't send Moses down the mountain with a couple of tablets with instructions to read them to the people; he descended on Mt. Sinai and from a distance, he spoke these commandments to them. (**Exodus 20:1**)

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.

2. Read [Exodus 19](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Do you think most non-Christians have a favorable or unfavorable view of the Ten Commandments?
4. Do you think most Christians have a favorable or unfavorable view of the Ten Commandments?
5. Do people consider the Ten Commandments as being too restrictive?
6. Do people consider the Ten Commandments as being out of touch with the times?
7. Read and discuss the Rob Schenck quote Pastor Gary mentioned regarding the legal battle over a display of the Ten Commandments that Faith and Action won in the District of Columbia.

“...The Ten Commandments are good for individuals, good for families, good for business, and good for society. They make us happier, healthier, safer, and more productive... These words are tools God has used for nearly four millennia to shape individuals and cultures. They will not get us into heaven because they are essentially rules for living here on earth. They will, however, change us both individually and collectively as a people. As you apply them in your life you will be changed—permanently. And, as you change, the people and things around you will change too. Those who embrace the lifestyle of the Ten Commandments will align themselves with the integrity America so desperately needs. This is why God is bringing these timeless truths to the forefront today. We ignore them at our own peril.”

8. Review and discuss the three divisions found in the Ten Commandments. (See #1 - #2 - #3 above)
9. Spend time talking about Jesus’ remarks in [Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28](#), focusing on the fact that he considered an attitude of the heart and mind as being sinful, even though no action was taken.
10. Review and discuss...
 - a. [Romans 7:7](#) – The Ten Commandments explain what sin is in a person’s life.
 - b. [Romans 3:20](#), [James 2:10](#) – The Ten Commandments expose sin in us.

- c. [Galatians 3:24-25](#) - The Ten Commandments express our need for a Savior.
- d. Allow the people in your group to share their experience concerning their salvation and the outline above.

11. Do the Ten Commandments cause you to live in obedience and holiness?

12. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: commit to learning the Ten Commandments, not for the purpose of being able to recite them from rote memory, but for the purpose of living them; remember that the Ten Commandments summarize God's moral code and they apply to all people, at all times, in all places; recite the commandments together in an attitude of prayer.

- i. You shall have no other gods before me
- ii. You shall not make for yourself an idol
- iii. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God
- iv. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy
- v. Honor your father and mother
- vi. You shall not murder
- vii. You shall not commit adultery
- viii. You shall not steal
- ix. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor
- x. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).