

March-May Church-wide Small Group Sessions

The 10 Commandments

Session #1: Introduction

OVERVIEW

Sunday Message Series: The 10 Commandments: Set Free to Live Free, Love God, Love Others

Resource: *The Ten Commandments: Living God's Way* by Mary Evans (CWR 2011)

Homework: Participants are asked to read the Scripture passages ahead of time in order to allow the Holy Spirit to inspire the understanding of their meaning.

Items needed for this session:

Handouts of Session #1, Service Project, and Map of the Exodus

A way to show the videos (laptop, screen, etc.)

Flip chart (easel) paper and marker.

LOVE: ENGAGE GOD AND OTHERS (20 minutes)

WELCOME

Prayer: Host prays asking for the Holy Spirit to lead the session, to inspire the understanding of the Scripture read, and to help participants apply the session to their daily discipleship.

Purpose: All grow groups during this series follow the same study on the 10 Commandments. These sessions are intended to help us grasp both what the 10 Commandments meant in their original context and also what they can mean for us today as a dynamic and profoundly relevant section of God's living Word. Further, we will explore why they are still relevant today, even though Jesus has come to put us "not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:15). Participants who take this study seriously will find it challenging and possibly even life-changing!

Calendar: 9 Sessions

NOTE: If the group chooses to spend a regular session time doing a service project, it could omit Session #9 and adjust the dates so you still end on May 20. (May 27 is all church game night.)

March 11: Session #1: Introductions, Orientation and Overview

March 18: Session #2: Who Do You Think I Am?

March 25: No session (Spring Break)

April 1: Session #3 Exclusive Rights

April 8: No session (Holy Week)

April 15: Session #4 Misrepresentation

April 22: Session #5 Respect!

April 29: Session #6 Sex and Violence

May 6: Session #7 Who Are You Kidding?

May 13: Session #8 The New Generation

May 20: Session #9 Wrap Up and Review

Covenant: Participants agree to love each other by

- Attending as many of the nine sessions as possible
- Participating in a service project
- Making room for everyone to share: be okay with silence and resist over responding
- Creating a safe space where people can be heard and feel loved: no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes
- Keeping anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group
- Avoiding gossip and immediately resolving any concerns by following the principles of Matthew 18:15-17
- Giving group members permission to speak into my life and help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God
- Inviting friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers
- Getting to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly.

INTRODUCTIONS. Each person gets 2-3 minutes to share:

1. Your name
2. Describe your current life situation (family, work, interests, etc.)
3. Share one “life rule” you try to live by. (Host: Create a list of “life rules” shared by writing them on the large sheet of flip chart paper.)

SERVE: ENGAGE THE WIDER COMMUNITY (10 minutes)

SERVICE PROJECT (*see attached sheet*)

Group decides on a service project idea and date.

GROW: ENGAGE GOD’S WORD (40 minutes)

INTRODUCTION to the 10 Commandments: (*By volunteer reader.*)

The Old Testament tells us that engraved on the stone tablets that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai were “The Ten Words” (Exodus 34:28 and Deut. 4:1). Most English versions translate “words” as “commandments” and, although this is not the literal meaning of the Hebrew, it does help us to understand the sense. These were clearly intended to be a summary of the whole law.

Often when we get a new computer, printer or some other electronic gadget, we are provided with a large handbook of detailed instructions. However, we also get a single-sheet list giving us a ‘Quick-Start Guide’ to help us get the general picture and use the machine straight away, before we have understood all its complexities. The “Ten Words” function as this kind of “Quick-Start Guide.” Of course for a full understanding of a new machine we do need to use the large handbook and we must never see the Ten Commandments as a replacement for the whole Bible - or even the whole Old Testament!

There are in fact several summaries of the Law, see for example the list in Leviticus 19. The teacher of the law in Luke 10:27 combined Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 to make an even shorter summary. However, although the text doesn't actually say so at any point, it is universally agreed that the "Ten Words" refer to the list found in Exodus 20:2-17 and repeated in a slightly different form in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. The Deuteronomy list gives the fourth, fifth and tenth commandments in an expanded form but there is no difference at all in the basic sense or the obligations demanded. The original text contains no numbering and dividing the list up into ten parts is not quite as straightforward as it sounds. You may have noticed that Catholic and Protestant traditions, both referring to different scholars from the Early Church, have divided the commandments in a slightly different way. You can either see the Catholic list as joining the first two together and dividing the last one, or the Protestant list as dividing the first one and combining the last two. This group study will use the Protestant numbering. Both methods, in fact, see every element of the original as important.

Much of the Old Testament legal sections contain case-study laws (the technical term for this is casuistic law), i.e. "if this or that happens then you should take this or that action." This does not necessarily mean that the original happening is good. As Jesus points out, the fact that the Law says "if a man divorces his wife" followed by various regulations including giving her a certificate of divorce (e.g. Deut. 24:1-4), doesn't mean that God approves of divorce (Matt. 5:31-32). In addition to case studies there are command sections (the technical term is apodictic law) i.e. "You must do or not do this or that." In these sections God's attitude to particular behavior is very clear. The summaries, including the Ten Commandments, come into the category of command law. The "Ten Words" provide a basic summary of how Israel, as God's own covenant people, should live their lives. We need to be very clear from the beginning that this is not a "pick your own" list! It is not a matter of getting a pass mark as long as we keep six out of ten. The list provides a whole picture and to fail in any one of the issues mentioned is to fail overall.

CONTEXT: THE STORY OF THE EXODUS

Map: Explore the attached map. Locate Egypt, the path of the Israelites, Mt. Sinai, and Canaan.

Answer: Where does the map suggest they crossed the Red Sea?

Answer: How far of a journey was it from Egypt to Mt. Sinai?

Video: *The Bible Project: Exodus 1 of 2 Chapters 1-18*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jH_aojNJM3E (6:32 minutes)

Discuss: Almost immediately after Moses let the people out of Egypt, the Israelites grumbled and wanted to go back to Egypt (Exodus 16-17). Imagine being with them. Why might you grumble and want to go back?

Discuss: The video ended with the provocative question that the Israelites were actually like Pharaoh with hardened hearts. How are you like Israelites: How do you have a hardened heart? How do you grumble? How do you want to go back to familiar bondage rather than press forward into the unknown even though God is leading and providing for you?

THE LAW GIVEN BY GOD ON MT. SINAI

Video: *The Bible Project: Exodus 1 of 2 Chapters 19-40*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNpTha80yyE> (6:27 minutes)

Discuss: In Exodus God is taking a oppressed people and creating them into a nation. He frees them from slavery and provides them guidelines for living well. The key gift, however, is providing them access to God's own presence. How did the video help you understand how God provided access to Himself in the story of the Exodus?

Discuss: The video explained that Exodus ends with a problem. God's holiness precludes His interaction with sin, and since the people continue to commit many sins, they were unable to be close to God. God provided a temporary solution to fix this problem, which came in the book of Leviticus. Page through Leviticus and describe God's temporary plan to resolve the problem between God's holiness and the people's sinfulness.

SEEING JESUS IN THE SCRIPTURES

Discuss: The system of animal sacrifice is a temporary plan. God's final plan was the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross 1,500 years later. What connections do you see between Leviticus and Jesus?

INTO THE BIBLE

Read: The whole chapter of Exodus 19 out loud. In this chapter, God reestablished with the people the covenant He had made with their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Discuss: Verses 4-6 is God selecting the Israelites as His Chosen People. They were just newly freed slaves who were not worthy or holy. Yet God chose them. What does this say about how God values people?

Because of Jesus, all people can be adopted into God's chosen people. How does this make you understand your own relationship with God?

Discuss: Verse 19 shows the people agreeing to the covenant that God offered. Why do you think they agreed?

How about you? Why might you agree to enter into this covenant?

Discuss: God has come close to the people, but yet He also puts up boundaries (verses 12-14). How does this show the consequences of human sin?

Discuss: Notice the manifestations of God's presence in this story (mountain, smoke, earth trembling, trumpet sound, booming voice, boundaries). How does this show God's holiness?

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Share: How will you apply insights from this lesson to your life this week ahead?

LOVE: ENGAGE GOD (5 minutes)

LOOKING AHEAD:

Invite someone new to come next week! I will invite:

Do we need to call/text/email and remind one another? I will remind:

Homework: Read Exodus 20

Snacks/sweets for next time:

CLOSING PRAYER: *We will join in the covenant that God made with the people at Mt. Sinai.*

Host: In Exodus 19-30, God assembled the people at Mt. Sinai and entered into a sacred covenant with them. God chose the people as His people, and the people chose God as their God. The 10 Commandments and the rest of the Law that God gave was the terms of the covenant. Sinful people were reconciled to God through sacrifice. Until the coming of Christ, the sacrifices were animal sacrifices. The consequences of sin is death, and the death deserved by the God's people was first paid for by animal sacrifices, and ultimately and finally by Jesus' death on the cross. For our prayer time today, we go back to that covenant made at Mt. Sinai, and we join God's people. Through Jesus, we are adopted into God's chosen people, and we are made children of Abraham. So we, today, as our prayer time, adopt for ourselves the covenant that God made with Abraham and later His chosen people. This becomes our binding agreement with God.

Exodus 19 "Israel camped there in front of the mountain while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him from the mountain, 'This is what you should say to Jacob's household and declare to the Israelites: You saw what I did to the Egyptians, and how I lifted you up on eagles' wings and brought you to me. So now, if you faithfully obey me and stay true to my covenant, you will be my most precious possession out of all the peoples, since the whole earth belongs to me. You will be a kingdom of priests for me and a holy nation. These are the words you should say to the Israelites.' So Moses came down, called together the people's elders, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him." (Exodus 19:2b-7)

All: "The people all responded with one voice: 'Everything that the Lord has said we will do.'" (Exodus 19:8)

Host: Exodus 20:20 "Moses said to the people, 'Don't be afraid, because God has come only to test you and to make sure you are always in awe of God so that you don't sin.'" God then gave the people the 10 Commandments, and the rest of His laws. "Moses came and told the people all the Lord's words and all the case laws. (Exodus 24:3a)

All: "All the people answered in unison, 'Everything that the Lord has said we will do.'" (Exodus 24:3b)

Host: "Moses then wrote down all the Lord's words." (Exodus 24:4a) "Then Moses took the covenant scroll and read it out loud for the people to hear. (Exodus 24:7a)

All: "They responded, 'Everything that the Lord has said we will do, and we will obey.'" (Exodus 24:7b)

Host: Exodus 24:8 "Moses then took the blood and threw it over the people. Moses said, 'This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord now makes with you on the basis of all these words.'"

All: Amen!

SERVICE PROJECT COMPONENT

The Big Idea

- Service is an effective way to spur your spiritual growth! It is also one of the Methodist “methods” of growing in your faith. Combining Serve with Love and Grow is powerful!
- Research has shown that grow groups help people grow in their Christian discipleship better when all three components of Love, Grow, and Serve intentionally are incorporated into the grow group experience.
- The goal is to interact with others and serve together in a different setting, helping participants to get to know each other better, form relationships, and to apply their faith in concrete practice.
- Therefore, each grow group is asked to choose at least one service project to do together at some point during the grow group series.

Make a Plan

- During one of the first sessions, the group should choose a service project together.
- The group can either do a service project during the normal grow group time or agree to serve at a different time and/or location. The host should make sure plans are made.
- Some suggestions are listed below; other creative ideas are encouraged!
- The group should also debrief the experience at the next grow group session following the service project in order to help integrate the experience into your discipleship.

Service Project Ideas to Do as a Group Together

- Write cards of encouragement to people on the prayer list, or others in need
- Send Easter cards to home bound or college students (office has names and addresses)
- Create care packages for college students (church office has names and addresses)
- Visit (or take a meals to) home bound folks from our church (church office has contacts)
- Provide a meal for Wednesday evening at church
- Serve at Community Care: unloading truck & organizing food on Fridays 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. or help distribute food Saturdays 7-10 a.m. March 20-21, April 17-18, May 15-16
- Help at the All Church Outdoor Cleanup Day, Saturday May 9 starting 9 a.m.
- Cleanup and plant church flowerbeds (talk to Ann Klinner at 651-214-7313)
- Serve supper one evening at St. Andrew’s Family Shelter, Hugo, the week of March 8-14 or May 17-23
- Pack food as a group for the Feed My Starving Children Mobile Pack coming to Hosanna Lutheran Church, April 15-18 (connect with our church office to register)
- Volunteer at Community Helping Hand (call 651-464-8150)
- Play games with residents at Birchwood Healthcare (call Allison Ballstadt 651-464-5600)
- Volunteer at the Forest Lake Senior Center (call 651-464-5833)
- Come up with your own idea!

Debriefing Questions to Discuss at the Following Grow Group Session (10-15 minutes)

1. Remember what you did together and overall impressions. How did it go?
2. What was a highlight of this experience for you?
3. In what ways did you realize you were applying what you had been learning in your grow group?
4. Share ways you grew in your faith and/or prayer concerns arising from this experience.

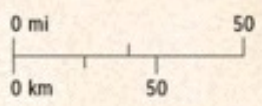
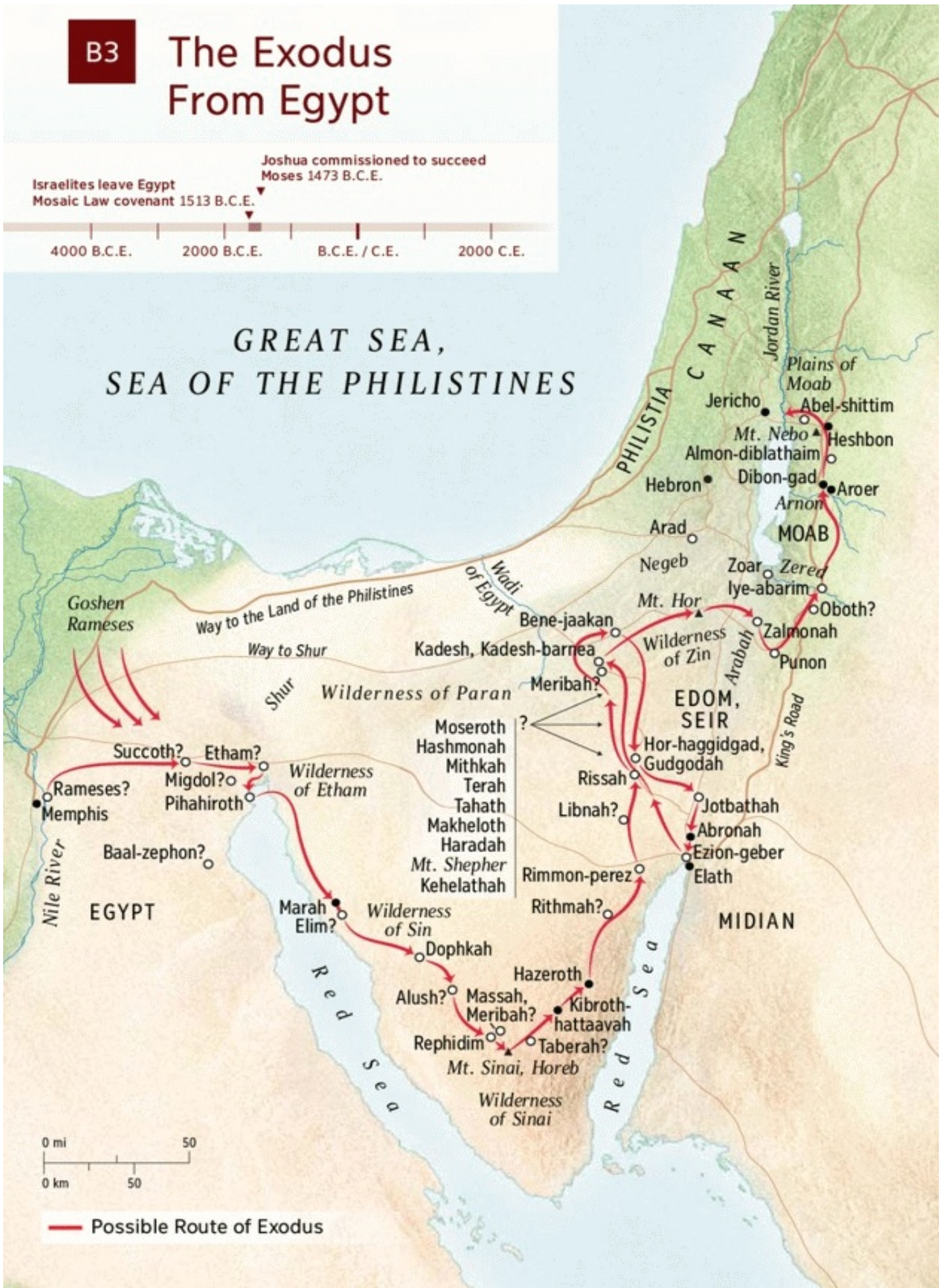
The Exodus From Egypt

Israelites leave Egypt
Mosaic Law covenant 1513 B.C.E.

Joshua commissioned to succeed
Moses 1473 B.C.E.

4000 B.C.E. 2000 B.C.E. B.C.E. / C.E. 2000 C.E.

GREAT SEA, SEA OF THE PHILISTINES



— Possible Route of Exodus

