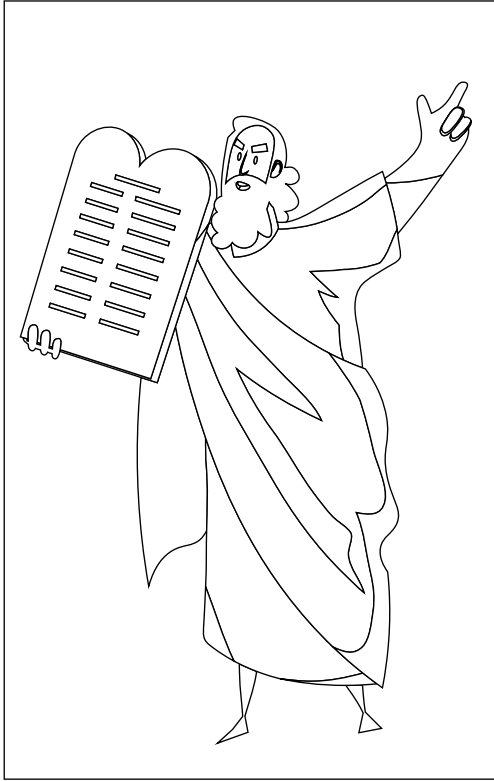


The ten commandments



Colour me!



Exodus 20:1-4, 7-17

God said to the people of Israel: I am the Lord your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt where you were slaves. Do not worship any god except me. Do not make idols that look like anything in the sky or on earth or in the sea under the earth. Do not misuse my name. I am the Lord your God, and I will punish anyone who misuses my name.

Remember that the Sabbath Day belongs to me. You have six days when you can do your work, but the seventh day of each week belongs to me, your God. No one is to work on that day – not you, your children, your slaves, your animals, or the foreigners who live in your towns. In six days I made the sky, the earth, the seas, and everything in them, but on the seventh day I rested. That's why I made the Sabbath a special day that belongs to me. Respect your father and your mother, and you will live a long time in the land I am giving you. Do not murder. Be faithful in marriage. Do not steal. Do not tell lies about others. Do not want to take anything that belongs to someone else. Don't want to take anyone's house, wife or husband, slaves, oxen, donkeys or anything else.

Commentary

When the Israelites reached Mount Sinai, God gave Moses ten rules for life to teach them how to love God and other people. These 'ten words', as they're known in Hebrew, have since been adopted by many societies as the basis for their own laws. Almost all of them are expressed negatively ('Do not...'), but this isn't because they were designed to tell people off. Rather, these rules called the people to be different from those around them who lived by different standards.

God's people were to be distinct in having just one God who was invisible and could not be likened to anything on this planet. God's people were also to stand out from others because they didn't use his name as a magic formula to control him or as a swear word. God's people needed to live their lives according to the pattern God had given in creation, and God's people were those who treated others with respect and dignity because all people were made in God's image. These commandments are uncompromising and all-embracing, given so that God's people would represent God in the world, and this is still their purpose today.

Questions

- ▶ Which of these commandments do you think is the most important?
- ▶ Which of these commandments is the hardest to keep?
- ▶ Which of these commandments is the easiest to obey?
- ▶ Are there any of these commandments that you could leave out?
- ▶ If you could add an eleventh commandment, what might it be?



Visual aid

Choose ten differently coloured pieces of string or wool, which will be tied as ten knots on to one long piece of string. Choose a different colour to represent each 'not' of the ten commandments.



Activity idea

The ten commandments were written on stone and brought down from the mountain by Moses. Collect ten flat stones on which you can write with a marker. Decide together on your own wording for each of the ten commandments.



Prayer idea

Turn each commandment first into a question and then into a prayer to say 'sorry' as you reflect on each of the ten in the list. Use your ten fingers and thumbs to work through the list. For example:

- Have I always put God first? "I'm sorry for so easily forgetting about you, God."
- Have we worshipped something else as more important than God? "We're sorry for letting things get in the way of loving you, Father."
- Have I really cared for my mom and dad? "I'm sorry for not loving them as I should."

Key verse

I am the Lord your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt (Exodus 20:2).

New Testament story link

Mark 12:28-34: Jesus sums up the ten commandments.



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