

Your heart,
God's boundaries,
& a community that makes a difference
Exodus 20:1-11 - Pastor Guy Gray

Now that God has your attention!

In Exodus 19 God brought the Israelites to the "Mountain of God!" There, at the foot of the mountain, they stood trembling as they watched God descend upon the mountain in fire, thick smoke, and thunder & lightning. The power and holiness of God were on full display, it was all set up for the words that would follow. God wanted their complete attention and He got it! But then He took them to the next level—the revelation of His Word. Remember—God will always direct us to His revealed Word. Feelings and experiences with God are important, but the Word of God brings the clarity we need to truly know Him and follow Him in our broken world. So God speaks these all important words that we have come to call the "Ten Commandments." Does God have your attention? Then focus in on His Word in Exodus 20—It is life truth in condensed form! There is so much for us to draw out of this important passage.

Above all, God wants your heart

Before the commands comes a reminder. Just as in Exodus 19:1-6, when God revealed His purpose for His people, so now He begins by pointing back to the miracle of redemption (Exodus 20:2). Everything is built on this. It is the Love, Grace, and saving work of God that comes first—even in the Ten Commandments. God has set them free from their past and from their slavery. And He has brought them unto Himself that they might know Him and have a special relationship with them. This points us to principle #1 of the Ten Commandments—above all, God wants your heart. This is an unexpected truth. When we think of the commandments, it is easy to think only of God's standards that we have to live up to, OR ELSE! But there is a deeper truth. God wants our hearts and He gives His Word so that we can know how to walk with Him in a real relationship of love. Jesus pointed to this when He clarified the real intent of the Old Testament law. He said the greatest law was to "love God" and the second was to "love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-40). In this saying Jesus actually summarized the Ten Commandments into two and showed that in the end it's all about a heart relationship with God.

The "yes" and the "no" of a real relationship with God

But a heart relationship with God must be acted upon in real life in concrete ways. That is where the specifics of the Ten Commandments come into play. God gives the guidelines for this real relationship—He

does so by giving boundaries. These boundaries are meant to protect the relationship. Many of the boundaries sound negative: “Thou Shalt Not” is what we hear most often in these commandments. But the key idea here is that in order to say yes to God, you are going to have to say “no” to something else. For instance, to say yes to the real God, you must say no to idols. God wants our hearts–100%, but there are many other things which will compete for God’s place in our hearts. Have you learned to say no, so that you can say yes to God?

A community that makes a difference

We must remember that in Exodus, God is forming a redemptive community. He is doing the same in the lives of Christ followers today. If the Israelites would obey these commandments, they would become a unique community of faith and love and so become a witness of God’s reality in a dark world. This would be seen through their devotion to the true and living God (part 1 of the Ten Commandments) and through their relationships of love and integrity with one another (part 2 of the Ten Commandments). This principle is true of our lives as well. It is our love for God and for others that is to be the core qualities of our community of faith. God has sent the power of the Holy Spirit to us through the New Covenant in Christ so that we might live this out. Let’s pray and believe Jesus to do this work within us, and by His power let’s obey and become the community of faith that makes a difference in this world for Christ (Jeremiah 31:31-34 & Ezekiel 36:26-27).

Questions for Personal Reflection and Discussion

Read Exodus 20:1-17 again.

What observations can you make about the Lord from the Ten Commandments? What is the heart of God? What role do relationships play in these Commandments?

Experiences and the Word

We talked this week about the importance of the “Word of God” in our relationship with the Lord. Feelings and experiences with God are important, but we need the Words (in the Hebrew, the Ten Commandments are actually the “ten words”) of God to bring clarity and boundaries. Explore this. In what way are feelings and experiences important? At what point can they be misleading? What clarity do *you* find in Exodus 20?

So “no” to say “yes”

In order to say “yes” to God, you are going to have to say “no” to something else. See what Paul has to say about saying no to sin and yes to the grace of Christ in Romans 6:14-18. How have you seen this

reality in your life? What have you had to say “no” to in order to deepen your relationship with the Lord? Is the Lord showing you anything today that you still need to say “no” to?

FRIDAY 02/16

Night Out: Evening
Together at River West
Dave Iula Jazz Concert
7pm, RWGT

SATURDAY 02/17

High School Ski Day
Departs 7am, RWLG

Ministry Prayer Time
8am, RWLG

SATURDAY 02/24

Family Fellowship Event:
Games & Hot Dogs
5:30pm, RWLG

WEDNESDAY 02/28

Israel Perspective
7pm, RWLG

SUNDAY 03/04

All Church Service
10am, Lakeridge HS

STARTING SOON

Christianity 101
Contact Paul Coleman at
256.0520

Forgiven & Set Free Bible
Study, Contact Sheri
Harkavy at 887.7080