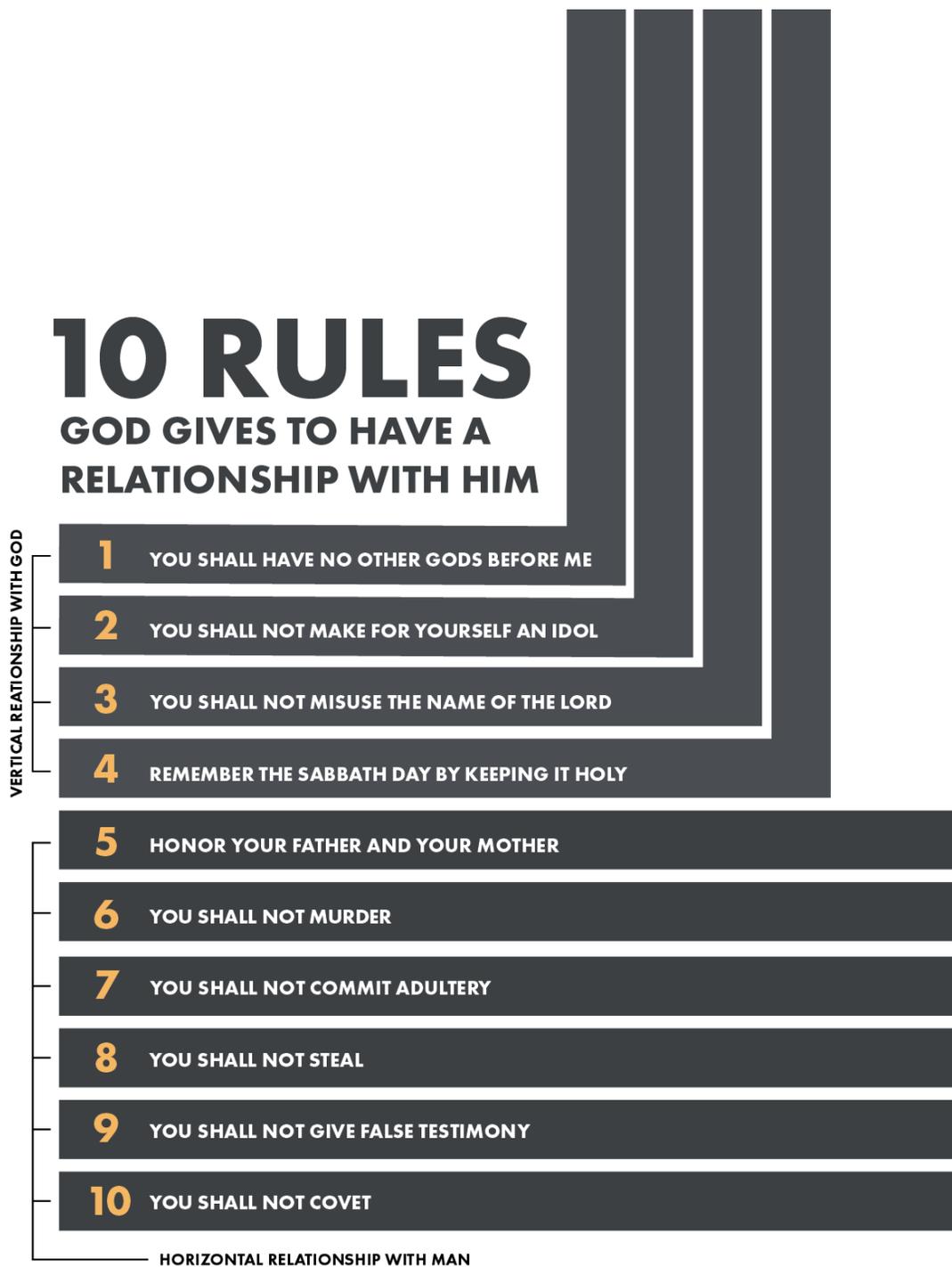




WEEK 3

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments help us answer the question, “Who is going to rule your life?” The first four commands are vertical—they show us how to honor God and be in relationship with Him. The last six commands are horizontal—they show us how to honor others and be in relationship with them. Because God is the only one that can save us, he asks us to put our entire life under His rule. This submission to God’s authority directly impacts all of our other relationships.



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ARE WARNINGS NOT THREATS

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood aspects of the Old Testament is the law. It has been distorted and misapplied for thousands of years: It's been used to fuel self-righteousness; to depict a judgmental and unforgiving portrait of God; interpreted so narrowly and harshly that its closest adherents didn't recognize the "fulfillment of the Law" (Matthew 5:17), Jesus Himself, in their very midst.

These misinterpretations still plague us today, so the question remains: how should we understand the law?

In Exodus 19, God provides Moses with the cornerstone of the law, the Ten Commandments, and He does so with these words: "Now if you will carefully listen to me and keep my covenant, you will be my own possession out of all the peoples, although the whole earth is mine, and you will be my kingdom of priests and my holy nation" (v. 5-6). Too often, we read these words as a threat, or a form of conditional love: I will only take care of you if you do what I say.

However, there is another way to read these words, and the commandments that follow.

As a mom, I frequently warn my boys to obey me for their own good:

- *If you don't listen to me, you're going to get hurt.*
- *If you don't stop jumping on the bed, you're going to fall.*
- *If you don't slow down, you're going to trip.*

These warnings are not threats. They are not signs of a conditional love. I am not manipulating them into submitting to me. Instead, I am beckoning them toward safety, wholeness, and health. I am showing them the path to life, and warning them away from a path that leads to pain.

This, in many ways, captures the heart of the law. And this heart becomes all the more clear in the verse that precedes God's warning:

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (vv. 3-4).

With this verse, God testifies to His own character, reminding the Israelites of His steadfast love, provision, and care. On that basis, God asks His people to trust and obey Him—not because the law is an arbitrary list of rules from a cruel and exacting God, but because the law is the path to life.

Too often, we miss this truth, that the law is beautiful, good, and a picture of humanity at its best. The first four commandments are, in essence, the pinnacle of "loving God." The following six commandments are the fullness of "loving neighbor." They instruct us on how to live, but more importantly, they clarify who we were created to be.

And yet, the law fell short. It showed us the destination without providing the ability to reach it (Romans 8:3). We can know the good, but find ourselves wholly unable to attain it. That is why the law condemns: the law is God's blueprint for human flourishing, without the tools to achieve it.

Enter Jesus. He did what no human was ever able to do. He was the perfect expression of the law. His life and words were the embodiment of God's design for us. That is the point of the Ten Commandments, and the whole of God's law: to point us toward God's good plan for us, while revealing our inadequacy to accomplish it. In short, the law points us to Jesus.

Written by Sharon Hodde Miller - *She Reads Truth*

WEEK 3

DAY 15 - MONDAY - JETHRO'S VISIT

Exodus 18, Deuteronomy 17:8-11, Acts 6:1-7

WE NEED EACH OTHER

Jethro's words echo God's words in Genesis 2: "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). If there is to be orderly ruling and subduing, if there is to be fruitfulness and multiplication as God has decreed, the work cannot be done alone. Just as God provided Eve to be a necessary ally to Adam, He now provides Jethro and the leaders of Israel to be necessary allies to Moses.

Don't miss this: The concept of self-reliance is wholly foreign to the Christian faith. We are created to need God and others. We are designed for interdependence and community. There is no such thing as a Lone Ranger Christian. It matters that we understand this as we listen for the echo of our own story in that of Moses.

Written by Jen Wilkin - *She Reads Truth*

Jethro cautioned Moses, saying, "You can't do it alone" (v.18). We need others to come alongside us, brothers and sisters in Christ who are willing to walk through this life with us. We need spiritual friendships that can encourage us, challenge us and point us to Jesus.

WHAT PUSHES US TO THINK WE HAVE TO "GO IT ALONE"?

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO IN YOUR OWN STRENGTH RIGHT NOW?

WHO CAN YOU SHARE THAT BURDEN WITH THAT CAN SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE YOU?

Go to graceclarksville.com/intheword for additional study resources.

WEEK 3

DAY 16- TUESDAY - THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Exodus 19, Exodus 20:1-21, John 1:14-17, Hebrews 8:7-13

WATCH BibleProject Exodus Part 2 Overview Video at bibleproject.com/explore/video/exodus-19-40

FEARING GOD

After giving the Ten Commandments to the people, in 20:20, Moses tells the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." The fear in "do not fear" carries the idea of dread—this kind of fear drives us away from God; it's sin adjacent. But Moses uses a different word when he refers to fearing God; it carries the idea of reverence and awe—it's joy adjacent, and it has the effect of drawing us to God. The fear of God is composed primarily of delight and awe, moving us toward God. It's like what we feel at the Grand Canyon—we take long trips to go stand on the edge with our eyes and mouths open wide, overwhelmed with beauty, yet knowing it could kill us. Moses says that's the kind of fear that keeps us from sinning against God.

Written by Tara-Leigh Cobble - *The Bible Recap*

**WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT
GOD IN TODAY'S READING?**

**HOW DO YOU VIEW "THE
FEAR OF THE LORD"?**

**HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO
WHAT YOU READ TODAY?**

**HOW DOES IT MOVE YOU TO
PRAY?**

Refer to pages 26-27 for more on the Ten Commandments.

WEEK 3

DAY 17 - WEDNESDAY - MOSES RECEIVES ADDITIONAL LAWS

Exodus 20:22-26, Exodus 21, Isaiah 44:6, Matthew 22:36-40

A FORM OF PROTECTION

Today's text from Exodus contains laws that would never fly here in the West today. Passages like these are why context matters. Scripture was written in its own particular context. And we read it in our own particular context.

For example, verses like the laws about slaves (Exodus 21:2-11) can be difficult to understand because when we think of slavery, we tend to think of the slave trade, or people being sold against their will, or human trafficking. And while all "slavery" exists because our world is broken and flawed, the slavery described in Exodus is what is known as "debt slavery." When a person or family found themselves in economic hardship and could not provide for themselves, they could become bond-servants or "debt-slaves" to another family. They would work for that family in exchange for food, shelter, and protection. This arrangement would last six years.

At that point, a man could leave, or choose to stay if he liked his situation. Women, on the other hand, were not released after six years because it was assumed that they would marry into their new family. For the woman, becoming a bond-servant often meant becoming a part of a family for life. She was to be treated as a daughter (v.9). There is a provision in today's passage for a woman who joins a family as a bond-servant, but doesn't end up marrying into that family. In that case, her own family can pay her debt and take her back. Her "master" cannot give her to anyone but her own family.

In our culture, this sounds strange, and perhaps even wrong. But in those days, people could not easily relocate from city to city. They were not generally free to choose their vocations. People tended to work family trades, live among the same people, and settle in groups. Neighboring clans were seen as threatening. The bond-servant system was a form of protection for the poor.

We should never try to explain away the problem of slavery. It isn't ideal. It is a product of poverty, and it provides an opportunity for people to treat each other in undignified ways if they choose. But in a world where the poor have no protection, laws like these provided some.

In what context is this law given? God has just led His people out of tyrannical, oppressive slavery. So that's one reason why we know God's law is not designed to sanction tyranny. Another reason is because the heart of His law is to love God and love others.

As you read passages like today's, which may be difficult to understand in our present context, remember how Jesus summarized the whole law of God: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands" (Matthew 27:37-40). This is the context for every law we find in the Bible, and every law we find in the Bible has been perfectly fulfilled in Christ (Matthew 5:17-18).

Written by Russ Ramsey - *He Reads Truth*

WEEK 3

DAY 18 -THURSDAY - HONESTY AND JUSTICE

Exodus 22, Exodus 23:1-19, Proverbs 31:8-9, I Corinthians 10:24

**TODAY'S READING IS FILLED
WITH THOUGHTS ABOUT HOW
WE ARE TO TREAT OTHERS.**

**HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO
WHAT YOU READ TODAY?**

**HOW DOES IT MOVE YOU TO
PRAY?**

WEEK 3

DAY 19 - FRIDAY - THE COVENANT CEREMONY

Exodus 23:20-33, Exodus 24-25, Matthew 26:26-29, Hebrews 9:18-22

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

Don't miss what truly happened when Moses took the sacrificial blood and threw half of it on the altar and half of it on the leaders of the people. This was not a scene from a horror movie or a superficial gesture. This was the moment the people of Israel had been waiting for. With the sprinkling of blood, the God of grace and the people of slavery were united. "Moses took the blood, splattered it on the people, and said, 'This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you'" (Exodus 24:8).

The fallen people have always needed a way to be right with the perfect Lord. Throughout the ages, God has graciously provided different ways and covenants to commune with His people. In the Old Testament, we see animal sacrifices, rules, and promises, and we might be tempted to think it's outdated. But even today we need a mediator to access our Holy God.

In this Lenten season, we prepare to celebrate a new covenant that God made with His people. Unlike the time of Moses, it is now Jesus who intercedes on our behalf with the Father. Rather than oxen blood thrown on an altar and our leaders, it is the blood of Christ that cleanses our sins and binds us to the Lord. The blood of Christ truly transforms us into God's children.

Written by Katie Stoddard - *She Reads Truth*

This covenant relationship with God that we see in Exodus is part of a line of covenants we see throughout the Bible. The closest thing we have in our culture to this type of covenant relationship would be the covenant of marriage. God is a covenant God who is committed to a personal relationship with His people and He is the perfect covenant keeper!

**WHAT DOES THE IDEA OF
BEING IN A COVENANT
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
MEAN TO YOU?**

Go to graceclarksville.com/intheword for more resources regarding the covenants seen throughout scripture.

WEEK 3

DAY 20 - SATURDAY - GRACE DAY

Use today to rest, pray, and reflect on this week's reading.

As you reflect on what you've read this week:

1. *What themes did you see emerge?*
2. *What was the biggest thing that God revealed to you this week?*
3. *What next step do you need to take based on what He revealed to you this week?*

WEEK 3

DAY 21 - SUNDAY - REFLECTION DAY

Meditate on these verses:

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery."

Exodus 20:2

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Hebrews 8:10