

The Ten Commandments

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WRITTEN IN STONE

When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

—Exodus 31:18

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever looked at a page of sheet music? There are a lot of black lines and dots and symbols all over the place. It's pretty cool looking and impressive, but it's not at all what the composer had in mind when he wrote the song. The composer wasn't after lines and dots and symbols—he was after *sounds*! He wanted to put music in people's ears and minds and hearts. He wanted them humming and singing along and even dancing to his song.

Well, this is similar to God's desire. When he gave people the Ten Commandments and, later, the entire Bible, he wasn't after a couple of heavy stone tablets and a bunch of big, thick books. He wanted to put his laws in people's minds and hearts. He wanted them to live by his laws.

Today's devotion is based on Exodus 31:18, which says, "When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God." The devotion is called "Written in Stone."

DEVOTION

"The cement truck's here!" Nate said. He and his parents watched the big truck back up to where their new driveway was going to be.

Nate's dad held up his hand. "That's good!" The driver got out and set up the chute. He pulled a lever, and the gray, slushy mixture started pouring out. Using long-handled tools, he and Nate's dad moved the cement around. When the first section of the driveway was filled, they used other tools to smooth out the cement. Then the driver moved the truck, and they began working on the next section.

Soon the job was done. Nate stuck his palms in the wet cement, then wrote his name and the date with his finger. Everyone applauded. The driver said, "That's going to be there a long, long time!"

God used his own finger to write the Ten Commandments on stone tablets. But what he really wanted to do was inscribe his laws on people's hearts! Are God's laws written on your heart, so they're part of you forever? Memorizing Bible verses is a great way to help God put his laws right where he wants them to be.

WORDS TO TREASURE

*"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts," [declares the Lord].**—Jeremiah 31:33*

QUESTIONS

1. Why, do you think, is God more interested in writing his laws on people's hearts than he is in writing them on stone tablets or in books?
2. If God really wants his laws written on people's hearts, why doesn't he just create people that way? In other words, why aren't people born with God's laws already written on their hearts?

Answer: God gave people the freedom to decide whether they wanted to receive his laws on their hearts. He didn't want a bunch of robots that were programmed to love and obey him. He wanted real *people* who would choose to love and obey him!

3. How can you tell if God's laws are written on a person's heart? By whether or not he or she has them memorized?

Answer: You can tell by their words, actions, and attitude. That's the only real proof. Memorizing God's laws is a great first step for a person to take toward achieving what God wants, but even if a person has all of God's laws memorized, that doesn't mean those laws are in his or her heart; at that point, they may only be in the person's mind.

4. Is it possible to have God's laws written on your heart if you dislike them and/or think they're stupid?

For a clue, either have children look up Psalm 119:97–104 or read this passage to them. The answer is no. You have to agree with God's laws, see the wisdom in them, and learn to love them in order for them to truly be written on your heart. This is what God really wants!

5. If God's laws aren't written on your heart, what *will* be? Will it be good for you or bad for you?

Answers: Some other "rules for living" will be written on your heart instead, such as the Devil's rules or the world's rules (those are rules that people make up all by themselves). It will be bad for you, because those other rules lead to evil and misery. God's rules are the only ones that lead to an abundant life here on earth and everlasting life in heaven.

Consider spending some time playing a game or doing an exercise to help children memorize the "Words to Treasure" Scripture verse.

MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES

1. Because Pharaoh ordered his people to kill all Hebrew baby boys, Moses's mother put Moses in a basket and hid it in the reeds along the bank of the _____ (Exodus 2).
2. _____ found Moses among the reeds along the riverbank, and she adopted him as her son (Exodus 2).
3. After killing an Egyptian, Moses ran away to live in a place called _____ (Exodus 2).
4. While Moses was tending sheep, God spoke to him through a _____ (Exodus 3).
5. God told Moses to go to Pharaoh and bring God's people, the Israelites, out of _____ (Exodus 3).
6. When Moses said that he wasn't a good speaker, God told him that his brother, _____, would speak for him (Exodus 4).
7. After Moses told Pharaoh to let God's people go, Pharaoh refused and said that the Israelites would have to make bricks without using _____ (Exodus 5).
8. When Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh, it turned into a _____ (Exodus 7).
9. Pharaoh wouldn't let the Israelites leave, so God sent ten _____ on the Egyptians (Exodus 7–11).
10. In the final plague, every _____ in Egypt was struck down and died (Exodus 11–12).
11. God told the Israelites to kill an animal and put its blood on their doorways so the final plague wouldn't touch them; this animal was called the _____ (Exodus 12).
12. Pharaoh let the Israelites go, but then he and his army pursued them, and God parted the _____ so the Israelites could cross it and escape (Exodus 13–14).
13. God went ahead of the Israelites in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of _____ by night (Exodus 13).
14. In the desert, when the Israelites were hungry and needed food, God sent quail and a special kind of bread called _____ (Exodus 16).
15. When the Israelites were thirsty and needed something to drink, God gave them water from a _____ (Exodus 17).
16. When Moses was on Mount Sinai, God gave him a set of laws called the _____ (Exodus 19–20).
17. Coming down from the mountain, Moses saw that the Israelites had begun to worship a _____ (Exodus 32).
18. Following God's instructions, the Israelites built a special tent, called a _____, where God could meet with them as they traveled through the desert (Exodus 36).
19. Because the Israelites disobeyed God by not entering the Promised Land when he told them to, God said they would live in the desert for _____ years (Numbers 14).
20. Moses died on _____, after God showed him the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 34).

Aaron	burning bush	Egypt	fire	firstborn son
forty	golden calf	manna	Midian	Mount Nebo
Nile River	Pharaoh's daughter	Passover lamb	plagues	Red Sea
rock	snake	straw	tabernacle	Ten Commandments

MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES *Answer key*

1. Because Pharaoh ordered his people to kill all Hebrew baby boys, Moses's mother put Moses in a basket and hid it in the reeds along the bank of the Nile River (Exodus 2).
2. Pharaoh's daughter found Moses among the reeds along the riverbank, and she adopted him as her son (Exodus 2).
3. After killing an Egyptian, Moses ran away to live in a place called Midian (Exodus 2).
4. While Moses was tending sheep, God spoke to him through a burning bush (Exodus 3).
5. God told Moses to go to Pharaoh and bring God's people, the Israelites, out of Egypt (Exodus 3).
6. When Moses said that he wasn't a good speaker, God told him that his brother, Aaron, would speak for him (Exodus 4).
7. After Moses told Pharaoh to let God's people go, Pharaoh refused and said that the Israelites would have to make bricks without using straw (Exodus 5).
8. When Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh, it turned into a snake (Exodus 7).
9. Pharaoh wouldn't let the Israelites leave, so God sent ten plagues on the Egyptians (Exodus 7-11).
10. In the final plague, every firstborn son in Egypt was struck down and died (Exodus 11-12).
11. God told the Israelites to kill an animal and put its blood on their doorways so the final plague wouldn't touch them; this animal was called the Passover lamb (Exodus 12).
12. Pharaoh let the Israelites go, but then he and his army pursued them, and God parted the Red Sea so the Israelites could cross it and escape (Exodus 13-14).
13. God went ahead of the Israelites in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13).
14. In the desert, when the Israelites were hungry and needed food, God sent quail and a special kind of bread called manna (Exodus 16).
15. When the Israelites were thirsty and needed something to drink, God gave them water from a rock (Exodus 17).
16. When Moses was on Mount Sinai, God gave him a set of laws called the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19-20).
17. Coming down from the mountain, Moses saw that the Israelites had begun to worship a golden calf (Exodus 32).
18. Following God's instructions, the Israelites built a special tent, called a tabernacle, where God could meet with them as they traveled through the desert (Exodus 36).
19. Because the Israelites disobeyed God by not entering the Promised Land when he told them to, God said they would live in the desert for forty years (Numbers 14).
20. Moses died on Mount Nebo, after God showed him the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 34).

Aaron	burning bush	Egypt	fire	firstborn son
forty	golden calf	manna	Midian	Mount Nebo
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Live It! Exodus 20:1-17

Ten Commandments

God's Ten Commandments show us how to love God and other people. Here is a list of the commandments, with an explanation of what each one means and how you can obey these commandments each day. Now read Exodus 20:1-17.

Live It!

Exodus 20:1-17

The Commandment:

Meaning:

How I Obey It:

How to show love to God.

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| 1. Have no gods before me. | Trust God only. | Pray about my needs. |
| 2. Have no idols. | Worship God only. | Thank and praise God. |
| 3. Don't misuse God's name. | Use God's name respectfully. | Don't use God's name to swear. |
| 4. Keep the Sabbath holy. | Rest and think about God. | Pay attention in church. |

How to show love to people.

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| 5. Honor father and mother. | Respect parents. | Obey my mom and dad. |
| 6. Do not murder. | Protect human life. | Help others not to get hurt. |
| 7. Do not commit adultery. | Be true to husband or wife. | Keep promises I make to others. |
| 8. Do not steal. | Don't take what belongs to others. | Don't take things that aren't mine. |
| 9. Do not give false testimony. | Don't lie about others. | Be truthful and don't gossip. |
| 10. Do not covet. | Don't want what others have. | Be satisfied with what I have. |