

A LOVING LAW

Ten Commandments
Exodus 20:1–21
1446 BC

BIBLE TRUTH

God guides and protects us.

LEARNER GOAL

I can paraphrase God's intent for how His human creatures should love Him and love one another.

BIBLE VERSE

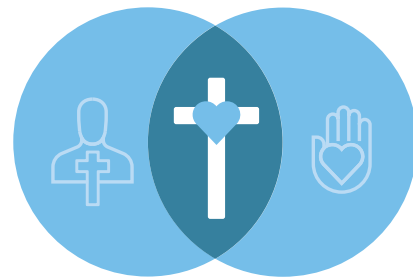
Love the LORD your God, and . . . serve Him with all your heart. Deuteronomy 11:13

LAW & GOSPEL

We reject God's Law as we go our own way, failing to love God and to love others before ourselves. **Jesus Christ kept the Law perfectly on our behalf, and He guides us to love Him and our neighbor.**

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

Months into their wilderness wanderings, the Israelites arrive at Mount Sinai. God comes to the mountain in clouds and thunder—fire and smoke—as He establishes His covenant with His people through Moses, His chosen intermediary. There on the mountain, God gives Moses His Ten Commandments.



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God has made me His creature, created to love Him and serve my neighbor.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I have been created to follow God's will: to love Him and serve my neighbor.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on learning for each age.

ADULT

I can paraphrase God's intent for how His human creatures should love Him and love one another.

YOUTH

I can cite examples of how God guides and protects us.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that God knows all that I need and that He guides and protects me.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God's rules are good.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*. Also see the map on page 120.

MORE TIME Review Questions 15–23 in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2017)* as well as the article "The Book of the Covenant" in *TLSB*, page 127.

IN DEPTH Read through the Small Catechism section "The Close of the Commandments."



LEADER NOTE

For the opening question, the idea is to get people thinking about how limitations to some freedoms actually open up opportunities to other freedoms. Examples include learning skills, such as sports or music, that require lots of practice and sacrifice to become an expert. The idea, in the end, is to lead people to understand how the seemingly negative constraints of God’s moral law actually help us follow His good plan for us as His human creatures.



BONUS ACTIVITY

Use Questions 10, 11, and 18 of *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* to review the doctrines of Law and Gospel. Find objects or illustrations to describe the three uses of the Law. Then, have learners think through what teaching the Law and Gospel might look like within their households.

LAUNCH

WELCOME

Welcome the group and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests; pray for those requests either now or at the conclusion.

REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Learner Goal, and Bible Verse. Then, begin with the opening reflection question on the lesson handout.

OPENING REFLECTION

When are outside constraints to your actions helpful? When are they harmful? Share a time when restraints helped you achieve your goals.

LEARN & LIVE

EXODUS 20:1–2

BIBLE COMMENTARY

After three months of travel, God finally brings the nation of His people (possibly as large as two million people) to Mount Sinai. Here, where God first spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, God now gives His moral law to Moses, who then intercedes by communicating it to God’s people. Yet God first reminds them that He is a merciful God of deliverance and salvation. The covenant He was making would be for their good, and ultimately the good of the whole world who awaited the restoration of all things through the promised Messiah.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What does God’s introduction to His Ten Commandments reveal about Him? How does this apply to God’s command that we should love Him and our neighbor?

REFLECTION HELPS

God gave His Law to His people out of love. His commands reveal His plan for His human creatures. We fail to obey the Law as God expects, yet He delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt and delivered us, through Christ, from slavery to sin. We strive to love Him and our neighbor not from a place of terror but from an understanding of what He’s first done for us.

EXODUS 20:3–6

BIBLE COMMENTARY

Although this whole long section is the First Commandment, we commonly shorten it to “You shall have no other gods.” It reveals God’s heart, which would have us not consider any person or relationship as more important than His relationship with us. This includes idol worship or anything that might take God’s place. God acknowledges that the sins of the fathers often follow their children. And although God warns about the consequences of disobeying this commandment, His exhortation of mercy and love toward His people greatly overshadows it. All other commandments naturally derive from this one, which tells us to fear, love, and trust in God alone.

REFLECTION QUESTION

This long section is known as the First Commandment, or the command through which all the rest flow. What do you think it means that God is jealous? What does this show about His desired relationship with us?

REFLECTION HELPS

In this case, the word *jealous* means that God does not want to share us with anyone or anything else. He demands that our security, identity, and meaning in life be found in Him. This comes out of a place of love for us, because apart from His mercy and grace, we are only destined for death and hell.

EXODUS 20:7–11

BIBLE COMMENTARY

God further communicates His will that we love Him above all else. This includes fearing and loving God so that we do not dishonor His name but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks. He also places great importance on our attitude toward meditation on His Word. In both these cases, God shows His desire that we simply receive His good gifts and honor them in and with our lives.

REFLECTION QUESTION

The Second and Third Commandments finish off what we call the First Table of the Law, or how we should love God. Why do you think these two commands are so important to God when our culture tends to treat them so lightly?

REFLECTION HELPS

As we use God’s name, we communicate to the world who He is to us. We are to use it to pray, praise, and give thanks. Likewise, God desires that His people dwell in His Word. Our culture of individualism always puts our needs before God.

EXODUS 20:12–17

BIBLE COMMENTARY

The Second Table of the Law, though short, carries huge implications. It lays out a pattern for how we properly respect one another as humans, beginning with honoring God’s authorities in our lives and ending with our intentions. No one but Christ has lived this perfectly. Still, it is God’s good will for us human creatures.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Commandments Four through Ten make up the Second Table of the Law: how we should love our neighbor. Try to connect how each of these commands, in order, builds off the previous ones. How does this help our understanding of God’s Law?

REFLECTION HELPS

If we do not first honor our authorities (e.g., father and mother), we will have no basis for respecting human life, marriage, personal property, honesty, or reputations, and we won’t be content. God’s Law helps us understand God’s good will for us.

EXODUS 20:18–21

BIBLE COMMENTARY

This passage shows that the Israelites were terrified of the Law of God. God’s Law shows us our sin and our need for a Savior. In His mercy, God ultimately sent Christ to suffer and die for our sins.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Rephrase the peoples’ reactions to Moses and also Moses’ response. What does this tell you about the purpose of God’s Law in the world? about God’s desire for the lives of His human creatures?

REFLECTION HELPS

The people feared God’s powerful Law and wrath. Moses responded that God’s Law was there to test the people so that they may not sin. God does not desire that any of His people should perish.

LOVE

FINAL REFLECTION

What does God’s Law show about His plan for us? How does this make Jesus’ sacrifice for you even more powerful in your life right now?

TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Page.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven’t yet, take prayer requests or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray before you leave.



BONUS ACTIVITY

Have the learners, individually or in groups, rephrase each of the Ten Commandments in their own words. Afterward, have them compare what they wrote down. Remind them that this exercise is only to help in understanding and teaching about God’s moral law, not a substitute for proper catechesis.



CHRIST CONNECTION

God’s moral law shows us our sin and our need for a Savior. Jesus is that promised Savior who has come to forgive us our sins.



LEADER NOTE

God’s Law reveals His good plan for human creatures. We cannot, however, live up to God’s standards, and we are deserving of hell. We need Christ’s forgiveness, and we receive it freely by grace through faith.

