

Life Lesson 28
The Ten Commandments
Text: Exodus 19 and 20

Introduction

How would you like to meet God? Someday you will, because the Bible says that everyone will one day stand before God and see Him, but the Israelites had a special meeting with Him. God told Moses to get the people ready. In three days He would come down so they could see and hear Him for themselves.

The Story

Can you imagine how excited the people must have been? For three days they were busy. They washed themselves and their clothes and cleaned everything up. That is a reminder to us that God is a holy God. He can't stand to have sin and uncleanness around Him. When we meet Him we want to be washed clean in Jesus' blood. That means that we have our sins forgiven and are clean on the inside.

Don't you imagine that on the third day everyone was up early? They must have been excited. Today they would get to see and hear the wonderful God who delivered them so miraculously from Pharaoh and who had faithfully provided their every need in the desert.

Boom! The thunder rolled and lightening flashed that morning. A thick cloud came upon the mountain and a loud trumpet blew. There was smoke everywhere as if the mountain were burning up, and the ground shook like an earthquake. The people were scared to death!

God called Moses up to the mountain and gave him a message to give to the people. The Israelites heard God's voice talking to Moses.

While Moses was up on the mountain, God gave him instructions to give the Israelites. They were directions for living. If they obeyed, they would please God and they would be happy. He told Moses all the people needed to know to live the right kind of life. Part of these instructions are the most famous rules in the world. Even people who aren't Christians have heard of them. They are called the Ten Commandments.

The first four of the commandments deal with our relationship to God. The next six deal with our relationships with other people.

"I am the Lord thy God," God told Moses. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." This was the first commandment.

What do you think it means to have another god before God? It means to love someone or something more than you love Jesus. If something becomes more important to you than God, it becomes an idol to you.

Many people worship other gods like Buddha or Allah, who aren't true gods at all. Even more people worship the god of money or the god of fun. Many people worship themselves, because they love themselves more than they love God. We are breaking God's first commandment if we don't love Him with all our hearts and don't give Him first place in our lives.

The second commandment is similar to the first one. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." This means we should never, ever, make a statue and bow down to it. Many people in our own country worship little statues they have made. Even more sad are those who claim to love God and yet make little statues of the disciples and other early Christians and worship and pray to them. Can you imagine how God must feel to have people that He made to

serve Him praying and asking help from silly, lifeless idols, and all the time claiming they are worshipping Him? How it must grieve Him!

The third command is “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” This means we shouldn’t use God’s name as a curse word. If you say “Oh my God,” you had better be praying! If you just say it when you are surprised or angry, like people do on television all the time, it is taking the name of the Lord in vain.

Christians don’t want to use the name of our wonderful God as a curse word. Many Christians break this commandment in another way, though, without realizing it. When we sing songs about God, praising Him with our mouths, but not with our hearts we are, in a way, taking His name in vain. When we sing songs in Sunday School and in the worship service, let’s remember that we are taking God’s name in vain if we aren’t thinking about what the songs mean and worshipping God with our singing from our hearts.

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy” is the fourth commandment. God wants us to work hard for six days, but He wants us to set aside a special day to rest and worship Him. Sunday isn’t our day. It’s God’s day. We should spend it doing what He wants us to do.

The Life Lesson

The first four commandments tell us how we are to act toward God. What does He want from us?

First to love and worship Him with our whole hearts. He must always be first and most important to us. Is anything more important to you than God?

Secondly, He says we are to never, ever, bow down or pray to a statue or a picture. In those days people were used to worshipping statues. That’s what the Egyptians and the other

people around did. But God doesn't want us to pray to an image. You are bigger than an image and more powerful than a statue – but God is far more powerful than you are. When you pray to the God you can't see, you are bowing to someone far greater than you.

Thirdly, you should say God's name respectfully and with special meaning. Don't ever use God's name as a swear word or say it thoughtlessly. If you love Him and put Him first, you won't want to do that!

Fourthly, He wants you to set aside a special time to spend with Him. You enjoy it when people you love, like your Mom and Dad, take time to be with you, don't you? It helps you know you are important to them and that they love you. God wants you to take time to listen to Him and to worship Him. That's what Sunday is all about!

Obeying God in these four things will make Him happy – and will make you happy, too.

Next week we will look at the other six commandments, which tell us how to live happily and at peace with other people.

Review Questions

What were the Israelites to do to prepare to meet God?

They were to get everything clean.

How do we get our lives clean?

By confessing our sins and asking God to forgive us.

What did the Israelites see when God came down to meet them?

There was thunder and lightening, earthquake and smoke.

What are the laws God gave Moses called?

The Ten Commandments

What are the first four commandments about?:

Our relationship with God.

What is the first commandment?

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

What is the second commandment?

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

What is the third commandment?

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

What is the fourth commandment?

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.