
LIVE FREE

The Ten Commandments

RULES, RULES, RULES

- *Tell the them to imagine waking up and finding themselves home alone with no rules to follow. Ask them how they would spend that day.*
- *Now have them imagine that this no rules scenario continued. Ask them what consequences they might encounter. (E.g., If they stopped doing chores, the house would become messy.)*
- We may not always like them, but rules are important. They show us how to respect and care for others and ourselves.
- Likewise, our faith has rules to show us how to best love God, others, and ourselves. Without rules in our faith, we are merely guessing at how to be good and holy. The Ten Commandments show us how to follow God.
- God used Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. But the Israelites still struggled to understand how to follow God even though they were free from the Egyptians' harsh rules, and all they had to do was trust God.
- But without clear direction, it was difficult to trust God. Journeying toward the Promised Land, the Israelites made many poor decisions that showed they were not trusting of or grateful to God or even Moses.
- But God wanted the Israelites to live in true freedom as His people! He knew that, despite their mistakes and complaints, His freedom would give them true happiness.

GOD RULES

- *Read the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17).*
- God's solution was to give the Israelites the Ten Commandments to help them follow and trust Him. The Ten Commandments are sometimes called the "Decalogue." Decalogue literally means "ten words," reminding us the Ten Commandments are the Word of God, given directly to us. (CCC 2056)
- The Decalogue is so important that God physically wrote them Himself! Exodus 31 tells us that God gives Moses two stone tablets that have the Ten Commandments on them, "written with the finger of God." (CCC 2056, 2058)
- God places this emphasis on the Ten Commandments because they reveal who He is — a God who is love and calls us to love. With the Decalogue, the Israelites can now clearly see God's will. He is asking for a relationship; He offers His love and life to the Israelites, asking them to follow the commandments, His rules for love, in return. (CCC 2059-2062)
- The Ten Commandments invite the Israelites to think in a totally new way. Their minds are stuck on their slavery in Egypt and their journey to the Promised Land. But with the Decalogue, God is trying to save them from a different kind of slavery — the slavery of sin — and lead them on another journey down the path of life. (CCC 2057)

PLAYING BY GOD'S RULES

- The story of the commandments does not end there. Some people dismiss the commandments as ancient rules. But as moral truths that “sum up and proclaim God’s law,” the commandments go beyond one group of people and one time in history. (CCC 2058, 2063)
- The Ten Commandments continue with us. Jesus affirms this many times, even in His first big teaching moment – the sermon on the mount.
- Jesus explains that He has not come to get rid of the law. Rather, He reminds us the law is about love. (CCC 2053)
- And, because He is sinless, Jesus lives the commandments perfectly. He asks us to imitate His example because following the Ten Commandments is a part of following Him. (CCC 2053)
- The Church follows Jesus’ example, continually reminding all God’s people throughout history that the Ten Commandments are “required in the love of God and the love of neighbor.” (CCC 2064-2067)
- And the story of the Ten Commandments does not just continue with “us.” It continues with you. (CCC 2063)
- Following the Decalogue is not just a general group activity. God has engraved this law of love on the heart of every single human being. (CCC 2063, 2072)
- By teaching us how to best love God, others, and ourselves, the commandments lie at the heart of what it means to be truly human and truly holy. Because of this, God asks every person to follow the Decalogue “always and everywhere.” (CCC 2072-2074)
- God offers to each of us the covenant He offered the Israelites. He gives us His life and love, asking that we follow the commandments as His rules for love. This offer is not forced; it is up to you to accept.
- We can all do better at following the commandments, whether you know them well or are just learning about them for the first time. We are all called to praise God, glorifying Him not just for what He does but simply because He is God. The more we follow the commandments, the more our lives reflect and praise the God who is goodness and love. (CCC 2639-2642)
- *Encourage them, as they learn more about the commandments, to examine which commandments seem most difficult for them. Challenge them to make a concrete resolution for themselves to better follow each tough commandment they encounter.*