

# The Heart of the Law: Commandments 5-10

Exodus: Life in the Wilderness- Part 6  
May 17, 2026

## Discussion Questions

1. **The Context of Grace:** God gave the Law *after* He rescued Israel from slavery. How does the fact that they were already "saved" change the way we view the Ten Commandments today?
2. **Weighty Honor:** In Exodus 20:12, to "honor" means to give "weight" or significance to someone. In our modern culture, where youth and independence are often prioritized over the wisdom of elders, what are some practical ways we can continue to give "weight" to our parents as they age?
3. **The Sanctity of Life:** How does the commandment "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13) change our perspective on how we treat people we disagree with or find difficult to love? How does seeing everyone as an "image-bearer of God" change our daily interactions?
4. **The Battle of the Heart:** Jesus taught that anger is the root of murder and lust is the root of adultery (Matthew 5). Why do you think God is more concerned with the heart (our thoughts and motives) than just our outward behavior?
5. **Protecting Trust:** Commandment 9 (Exodus 20:16) forbids "false testimony." Why is truth-telling so essential for a healthy community or church? How do things like venting or gossip erode the trust God wants us to have with one another?
6. **The Contentment Challenge:** Commandment 10 (Exodus 20:17) deals with coveting—an internal struggle. In a world of social media and constant advertising, where do you find it hardest to be content? How can we practice thankfulness as an antidote to coveting?
7. **Integrity in the Little Things:** Stealing (Exodus 20:15) isn't just about bank robberies; it can include "stealing time" at work or being dishonest in small transactions. Is there an area of your life where you feel the Holy Spirit nudging you to act with more integrity?
8. **Building Honor-Worthy Homes:** For those who are parents or mentors, what are some specific ways you can strive to make your home or influence "worthy of honor"? How can we model God's grace to the next generation?
9. **The Culture of Rage:** When you feel bitterness or anger rising toward someone, what is a gospel-centered way to handle that emotion rather than letting it turn into "heart-murder"?
10. **Law vs. Gospel:** Looking at the instructions for the altar in Exodus 20:24-25, it

was to be made of earth and uncut stone—nothing man-made. How does this remind us that we cannot fix ourselves or improve our way into God's presence? How does resting in Jesus' finished work (Galatians 4:4-7) provide the power to actually obey these commandments?

# Summary

Every law tells a story. In our own country, we have bizarre statutes—like it's against the law to carry an ice cream cone in your back pocket in Alabama or fish from the back of a camel in Idaho. While these seem ridiculous, they reveal what a society values or seeks to protect. If human laws reveal the heart of a culture, God's laws reveal the very heart of the Creator.

In Exodus 20, we find the Ten Commandments given to a people already rescued from slavery. This is crucial: God doesn't give these rules so that we might earn His love; He gives them because we are already His. Having explored the first four "vertical" commandments regarding our relationship with God, we now turn to the "horizontal" commandments that govern our relationships with one another.

## Commandment 5: Honoring the Foundation of Family

*"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." (Exodus 20:12)*

God begins the social commandments with the family. To "honor" means to give "weight" to something, treating it as significant and valuable rather than light or trivial. For children and teenagers, this manifests as respect and obedience. However, this command does not expire when we leave home. Even as parents age and their strength or mental clarity fades, we are called to love, care, and support them.

Simultaneously, this is a call to parents to build homes worthy of honor—environments marked by grace, consistency, and healthy marriages that provide stability for the next generation.

## Commandment 6: Valuing the Sanctity of Life

*"You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13)*

At its base level, this is a law against premeditated killing, but its revelation is deeper: God deeply values life. Because humans are made in the image of God, every person—from the womb to the elderly—possesses inherent dignity and worth.

Jesus later elevated this command by moving it from outward behavior to the "heart"—the core of our mind and will. He taught that harboring hatred or calling someone a fool makes us guilty before God. In a "culture of rage," we must examine ourselves for bitterness and choose the path of confession and grace.

## **Commandment 7: Fidelity in the Covenant of Marriage**

*"You shall not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14)*

Marriage is a covenant—a binding promise before God—intended to reflect God's own faithfulness to His people. Within this boundary, sexual intimacy is a beautiful gift, much like fire in a fireplace. However, when taken outside of marriage, it becomes destructive, leaving lasting wounds that ripple through families and communities.

Again, Jesus raises the bar, stating that lust in the heart is adultery. This is a modern battleground; statistics show that 75% of Christian men and 40% of Christian women struggle with pornography. God desires freedom for His people, not the slavery of addiction or secrecy.

## **Commandments 8 & 9: Integrity in Possessions and Speech**

*"You shall not steal." (Exodus 20:15) "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." (Exodus 20:16)*

Stealing is a violation that goes beyond material theft; it includes stealing time from an employer or cutting corners with clients. It reveals a disregard for what God has entrusted to others.

Similarly, because God is a God of truth, we are called to be people of our word. This means rejecting gossip, slander, and the twisting of facts, ensuring that our words are

consistently trustworthy.

## Commandment 10: The Battle for Contentment

*"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*  
(Exodus 20:17)

The final commandment deals entirely with attitude. To covet is to fix your heart on what someone else has, revealing a lack of trust in God's provision. We live in a world designed to feed discontentment through every screen and advertisement. Contentment is not about a lack of ambition, but about a heart posture of thankfulness, trusting that God has provided exactly what we need according to His wisdom.

## From the Law to the Altar

The weight of these commandments can feel like a burden because they reveal how far we fall short of God's holiness. But the passage doesn't end at commandment ten; it ends with instructions for an altar of sacrifice. The altar was to be made of earth or uncut stone—never "improved" by human tools—because access to God is not something we manufacture or achieve through our own effort.

Jesus Christ fulfills this perfect standard. As He says in **Matthew 5:17-18**:

*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."*

Because Jesus kept the law perfectly and was sinless, He became the sacrifice for our failures. This transformation is captured in **Galatians 4:4-7**:

*"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship... So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir."*

In Him, we are no longer slaves to sin or to a list of rules to earn approval. We are the forgiven and adopted children of God. Our obedience is no longer driven by fear of rejection, but by the grace and love of a Savior who has already accepted us.