



I AM YOUR GOD

And God spoke all these words: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me. "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Ex 20:2-7

Getting on the Same Page

The journey had begun. And, like all journeys, there is a "from" and a "to". God saved Israel from slavery, and He saved them to become a holy nation – set apart for His purposes. Israel was to be different than the pagan nations surrounding them; they were called to honor God and to point others to this LORD. Just weeks after the exodus, God inaugurated a new covenant with Israel that, if obeyed, would shape them into the holy nation that He intended them to be.

Three months after their escape, the Israelites came to Mount Sinai. Moses gave the people a word from God: If they obeyed and kept God's covenant, they would be His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. And the people promised to do so. Three days later, the mountain shook with thunder, and lightning flashed in the sky. Moses brought

the Israelites to the mountain, and the people covered their ears as a deafening sound, like a trumpet, grew louder and louder. They cried in fear of their lives.

Then the Lord came down in fire and smoke and told Moses to keep the people back so they wouldn't die from seeing Him in His true glory. When the people heard God's voice, they grew afraid, and they asked Moses to speak with God on their behalf.

The Ten Commandments, the first being that the people would have no other gods but Him. And the Israelites promised to worship the Lord alone and to keep all His laws. Moses spent 40 days and nights on the mountain with God. But upon his return, he found the people bowing down to an idol—a golden calf that Aaron made for them out of the jewelry they had taken from the Egyptians. They had forgotten their promise to God. In his anger, Moses broke the stone tablets on which God had inscribed the Law, burned the golden calf and atoned for the sin of the faithless. God's wrath burned against the Israelites, and He punished them but did not destroy them altogether. He remembered His promise to make them a great nation.

Discussion Questions

Getting Started

- What words do you associate with laws?
- In what ways are traffic laws a form of protection?
- What words are often associated with the Ten Commandments?
- How would you define the word "happiness" now? How about when you were a child?
- Respond: Too often we assume that happiness and holiness are mutually exclusive. We think we have to choose one or the other. But holiness and happiness don't stand in opposition. It's quite the contrary. Happiness is the product of pursuing holiness.

Study

- Before you begin, see how many of the Ten Commandments you can name from memory as a group.
- Why is it significant that verse 2 comes before the Ten Commandments? How does verse 2 shape what comes after it? Then have a group member read Exodus 20:1-21 aloud.
- Which relationships are spoken about in the Ten Commandments?
- How are the 10 Commandments designed to protect, guide, and connect us.
- What do the Ten Commandments reveal about the nature of God and His desire to have a relationship with us?
- God describes Himself as jealous. What does this tell us about God? Why is it okay for God to be jealous?

- What attributes of God did you see in this passage that particularly struck you? How should it change the way you pray, think, speak, or act this week?

Apply

- Do you see God's laws as a blessing? Why or why not?
- In what area of your life have you struggled to believe that obeying God (pursuing holiness) and being happy were in conflict with one another?
- How have you seen sin separate people from others, from God, from themselves? Where is there evidence of that in your own life?
- How have you seen evidence of your faithful obedience protecting, guiding, and/or connecting you with others, God, and yourself?

Further Study

- Exodus 20:22-23:33 is commonly known as the "Book of the Covenant." It interprets the Ten Commandments into a set of specific laws for the people of Israel in their immediate historical/cultural context. What patterns do you see in these laws? Whom do they protect? What do they celebrate? How do they honor God?
- Where do you see God's transcendence (majesty and authority) reflected in His commands? Where do you see God's immanence (intimate involvement in our lives) reflected in His commands?
- The "Book of the Covenants" gives a set of specific laws for the people of Israel in their immediate historical/cultural context. What general principles should be applicable to the Christian? What timeless truths does it communicate regarding justice, community, stewardship of property and the value of human life?