

# THE WAY OF FAITHFULNESS

**+ SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

God's law reveals who He is and how to live faithfully with Him and one another.

**+ BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Exodus 19–20

**+ SETTING:**

By the deliverance of the Lord, Moses led God's people out of the land of slavery, bringing them through the Red Sea and destroying the Egyptians who were chasing them. Then they entered the wilderness, where God tested them and provided for them. All the while, He was leading them to Mount Sinai, or Horeb, the mountain where God first appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Their arrival was a fulfillment of the Lord's promise to be with Moses (Ex. 3:12). At this holy mountain, the Israelites would worship the Lord who had saved them.

# DAY 1

## READ:

Exodus 19

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 19:4-6

NOTES

How we understand the goal of salvation is of crucial importance. Our view of God's work will shape the rest of our lives in profound ways. If the goal of salvation were simply to make a moral people, then the result would be a fixation on rules and rule-keeping. If it were just an escape ticket from trouble and hell, then God would become a genie to help in times of trouble.

But the goal of God's saving work is to restore what was lost in the garden of Eden: to draw God's image-bearers to Himself. Before sin entered the world, God walked in the garden in the cool of the day to enjoy fellowship with His people (Gen. 3:8). Sin, however, broke this relationship. Adam and Eve trusted in their own wisdom rather than the command and truthfulness of God.

The rest of the Bible is the plan of God's work to restore fellowship with humanity. His salvation delivers us from sin and death, removing the penalty for sin. He breaks the power of sin's grip and gives us commands to follow Him. By cleansing us from all unrighteousness and purifying us, God's deliverance results in renewed fellowship with God.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins with the famous question: "What is the chief end of man?" In other words, "What is God's goal for people?" The answer, while easily recited, is profound: "To glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

God's salvation plan has His glory and our enjoyment of Him as the goal. He rescued Israel out of Egypt, carrying them on eagles' wings to bring His people to Himself. He breaks the power of sin and gives His commands not to be a burden but a faithful and truthful guide for a righteous life. These gifts from God have the great goal of God and humanity enjoying a relationship together.

**How does fellowship with God reorient your view of God's commands?**

# DAY 2

## READ:

Read Exodus 20:1-17

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 20:1-2

## NOTES



### ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #18: GOD IS TRUTHFUL

The Scriptures are clear that in God there is no falsehood (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). God represents things as they really are. Everything He says can be trusted because God guarantees the truth of everything He tells us. The call for humans to be honest and not to bear false witness is rooted in the utter truthfulness of our Creator. Telling the truth is one way we bear the image of God, whose Son is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

For some people, the Ten Commandments are like a ladder to climb to God. Being religious is perceived to be about rule-keeping—doing good things and avoiding bad things. By obeying the commandments and doing more good deeds than bad, some people think that God will be pleased with them and love them.

Before listing His commandments, God said, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,” out of the land of their slavery (20:1). God’s commands are not given as a ladder to climb up to reach Him. They are a gracious revelation of His character given to people who have already experienced His saving power.

God is gracious. He didn’t give His commandments to the Egyptians but to the people who had been liberated from slavery. He doesn’t give His instructions to people who are trying to be accepted but to those who have been called “my people” (3:7) and “my firstborn son” (4:22). His commandments are good for everyone, but they are specifically for those who have experienced God’s liberating grace. They remind His people what He is like:

- God’s beauty and glory are infinitely great and cannot be contained in an image.
- God satisfies the soul and provides rest.
- God is Father, the source of all authority.
- God is faithful.
- God is generous and will provide.
- God is wholly true.

The commands of God are not a ladder to reach God but a gracious revelation of who He is. And when God’s character is seen as good and gracious, the human heart looks at God and others with different eyes.

### What do the Ten Commandments reveal about God’s character?

# DAY 3

## READ:

**Romans 3**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Romans 3:19-20**

NOTES

Ask someone how many of the Ten Commandments they can name and they will probably be able to name a few of them. Ask how many they have kept and many people can say that they have kept most of them. They've never worshiped an idol. Murder? Nope! Maybe a white lie here or there. Overall, most people think they have done a pretty good job at obeying God's law.

Press further, however, and a different story begins to emerge. When the spirit or the intent of the commandment is explained, suddenly people respond differently. Have they wanted to destroy someone's reputation? Have they been wholly truthful? What about that item they took and now call their own due to someone else's forgetfulness? What desires motivate their purchases?

When pressed with the heart behind the commandments, everyone suddenly finds themselves falling short. People try hard to be good. With a little reflection and consideration, however, it is not difficult to see how breaking one commandment means that the others have been broken as well. A little lie is told to protect one's reputation. A stolen item came from a covetous heart. An inability to rest one day a week flowed from a fear that there might not be enough time tomorrow to finish everything.

Paul said that by knowing the law we become conscious of sin. Like a mirror, the law shows us our dirty hearts. It does not make our hearts clean but causes us to desire the water that can wash us clean. This is how the law serves us: it shows us our need for a Savior.

**What does the law teach you about your need for a Savior?**

# DAY 4

## READ:

1 John 5

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 John 5:1-4

## NOTES

Love. People sing about it. Movies portray it. Romance novels fantasize about it. But what is it? In Western society, love is a feeling. It is the experience of being overwhelmed and overcome with intense emotion for another person. Love is sentimental, filled with gooey and mushy thoughts and heart palpitations.

In an age when everything is expressed in therapeutic language, it can be hard to imagine loving God. How can you have overwhelming, sentimental feelings for an unseen and transcendent Being?

The Bible is clear that loving God is connected to obeying God's commands. John wrote explicitly that loving God means keeping His commands (1 John 5:3). The heart can love the feeling of God's presence and adore all of His good gifts. All the feelings in the world, however, are insufficient to love God if there is no obedience to His commands.

The Lord gave His law to His people to teach them how to love Him. He was specific and clear—love for Him would be expressed in both feelings and actions. Being devoted to Him means worshiping Him alone. Loving Him means representing His name as holy. Trusting Him is reflected in resting from work one day a week and relying on the Lord to meet those daily needs.

Love expresses itself as faith in action. Love for God looks like trust in Him, for He is our only hope. It believes that He is our good and generous provider. It relies upon Him as a faithful God who keeps all of His promises.

**What are some ways love for God might look like in action?**

# DAY 5

## READ:

**Exodus 20:12-21**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Exodus 20:12-17**

## NOTES

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Those who have love are children of God, and those who do not are children of the devil. Have anything else you like, but if you lack this one thing, then all the rest is of no use to you whatsoever. On the other hand, you may lack almost anything else, but if you have this one thing, you have fulfilled the law."<sup>1</sup>

-Bede (c. 673-735)

Ask someone to define what it means to love people and you may get a response that says, "Just be nice." If someone is not nice, they are not loving. But what does being nice mean? Some people think niceness is simply affirming everything that someone says or does. According to this definition, to be loving is to never question anything someone does, even if he or she is doing something morally wrong.

When Jesus was asked to sum up the law, He defined it as loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:36-40). With these two statements, Jesus summarized the first four commands as love for God and the last six as love for neighbor. By giving us this simple formulation of love, Jesus clarified that love is more than mere "niceness." It is rooted in gracious, truthful interactions with others. Love does not cause harm to our neighbor but seeks to help them out in their time of need. Love acts with purity in thought and actions toward others. Love respects our neighbor's belongings and helps them to improve and protect what they have. Love does not betray, slander, or speak ill of our neighbor but speaks well of them. And love does not try to get what our neighbor has but helps us to use what we have for their benefit.

Loving our neighbor is not merely avoiding evil and wrongdoing; love seeks our neighbor's good. When love is conceived of in these ways, there is more than a vague niceness being shown. Loving others means acting in ways that display how we would want to be treated.

**In what ways do the commandments teach us how to love others as ourselves?**

# GROUP

NOTES

**POINT 1: God gave the law to show His love** (Ex. 19:3-6; 20:1-2).

The Lord rescued and \_\_\_\_\_  
His people in the exodus so they could have  
\_\_\_\_\_ with Him.

God made His covenant with the Israelites by giving  
them His law, expecting their \_\_\_\_\_  
to it. But we cannot miss the fact that God's \_\_\_\_\_  
preceded His law, and yet both reflected His \_\_\_\_\_.



**Why should God's love for us motivate our obedience?**

**POINT 2: God gave the law to show how to love Him** (Ex. 20:3-8).

God's people are to love Him with all of their heart,  
soul, mind, and strength. This entails worshiping God  
\_\_\_\_\_, worshiping Him as Himself, and always  
honoring His \_\_\_\_\_.



**What are ways we might be guilty of making and worshiping idols?**

Our love for God is also shown through following  
His \_\_\_\_\_ example: resting in Him and  
\_\_\_\_\_ Him to provide for our needs and  
our \_\_\_\_\_.



**What are some reasons we struggle to rest in honor of God?**

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"I must act in a holy manner, not for reward or appearance, but because of God's nature. The Law continually reminds me that commandments are to be kept, not for their own sake, but for God's sake. I will be righteous then, because God's nature is such. His character determines my conduct."<sup>2</sup>

-Jim Elliot (1927-1956)

### POINT 3: God gave the law to show how to love one another (Ex. 20:12-17).

The last six commandments show how we are to \_\_\_\_\_ God in our \_\_\_\_\_ for the interests of others, not merely our own.

### ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #18: GOD IS TRUTHFUL

The Scriptures are clear that in God there is no falsehood (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). God represents things as they really are. Everything He says can be trusted because God guarantees the truth of everything He tells us. The call for humans to be \_\_\_\_\_ and not to bear false witness is rooted in the utter truthfulness of our \_\_\_\_\_. Telling the truth is one way we bear the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, whose Son is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).



What are some ways obeying the Ten Commandments displays God’s character to the world?

### MY RESPONSE

Because Jesus has fulfilled the law in our place, we are now free to please God and display His redemptive purpose in our relationships with others.

- **HEAD:** How might obedience to God’s commandments put believers at odds with the world?
- **HEART:** What are some ways God’s commandments are revealing sin in your life? Repent in prayer now.
- **HANDS:** How will you live differently so that your words and actions point to the glory of the Lord who loves us and gave Himself for us?

NOTES

### VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“Now once a man has thus been humbled by the Law and brought to the knowledge of himself, then he becomes truly repentant; for true repentance begins with fear and with the judgment of God. He sees that he is such a great sinner that he cannot find any means to be delivered from his sin by his own strength, effort, or works.”<sup>3</sup>

–Martin Luther (1483-1546)