

Gospel Project Session 20

The Loving Lawgiver

Theological Theme: God's law reflects His good character and His desire to be first in the lives of His people.

In this session, we will listen to God's declaration of love for Israel and see how that declaration of love led to the giving of His law. The Israelites needed to understand God's love and what He expected from them. They needed to know God more fully and understand what it meant to live in a covenantal relationship with Him. Through God's law, we can see the holiness of God and His redemptive love for us, and as we obey, we reflect the holiness and love of God to the world.

Voices from the Church

"The God who loved Israel's forefathers enough to rescue their descendants from slavery is a God to be loved in return, with a covenant love expressed in obedience." ¹

–Christopher Wright

1. The Lawgiver _____ His people (Ex. 19:1-6; 20:1-2).

1 In the third month, on the same day of the month that the Israelites had left the land of Egypt, they entered the Wilderness of Sinai. 2 After they departed from Rephidim, they entered the Wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness, and Israel camped there in front of the mountain.

3 Moses went up the mountain to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain: "This is what you must say to the house of Jacob, and explain to the Israelites: 4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me. 5 Now if you will listen to Me and carefully keep My covenant, you will be My own possession out of all the peoples, although all the earth is Mine, 6 and you will be My kingdom of priests and My holy nation.' These are the words that you are to say to the Israelites."

In love, God was preparing the hearts of the people by reminding them how He treated them in the past. He was also re-establishing the nature of His relationship with them by reminding them of the covenant He had established with Abraham. God was teaching them about His grace and how to respond in ways that would please Him and reflect His love to the rest of the world.

God told Moses to remind Israel that He was the One who delivered them from their bondage to the Egyptians and brought them to Himself. In delivering Israel, God was putting His character as Redeemer on display.

How has God given you evidence of His love through a rescue?

How is your life a testimony to the character of God as a deliverer?

When we think of Moses on Mount Sinai, we think of the Ten Commandments. But it's important to put those Commandments in context. Even the two verses that precede the Commandments (Ex. 20:1-2) reassure Israel of God's power and love.

1 Then God spoke all these words:

2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.

The Ten Commandments are not a list of rules from a rigid and uncaring taskmaster. They are from a loving Father who rescued His children from slavery.

2. The Lawgiver _____ first place in our lives (Ex. 20:3-6).

As we've seen, God reminded Israel again that He was their God and He alone had delivered them out of Egypt. The lesson is simple. God deserves our full devotion simply because of who He is. Watch how the first two Commandments reinforce this important truth.

3 Do not have other gods besides Me.

4 Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. 5 You must not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' sin, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commands.

God has no rival, and He has called people to demonstrate their loyalty by giving no one and nothing else greater devotion than is given to Him. In the garden, Adam and Eve fell to the temptation to "become like God." In this First Commandment, God turns right side up what was turned upside down by human sin. Giving God the place He rightly deserves in our affections is necessary for every action, thought, and relationship.

Is it possible to break one of the other Commandments without breaking the first? Why or why not?

What is the significance of this Commandment being the first?

The Second Commandment amplifies the First. In our sin, we who are made in God's image turn around and seek to make Him into ours. We fashion idols and put our trust in them, hoping they will make us significant and bring us salvation. The apostle Paul identified this desire in Romans 1:21-23.

The desire to deify anything but God comes from a heart that is always striving to compete with God for first place. Left to our own devices, we will always choose to exalt

ourselves and wrap our lives around things we believe will fulfill us. Our hearts have to be remade and empowered by something outside of ourselves, something that can break our sinful tendency to worship things that are inferior to God.

What are some of the good things in your life that you struggle against making into an idol?

How does the power of Christ help you keep these things in proper perspective?

Voices from Church History

“Remember what sin is: fundamental independence of God; the thing in me that says, I can do without God, I don’t need Him.”²

–Oswald Chambers (1874-1917)

Voices from the Church

“If anything becomes more fundamental than God to your happiness, meaning in life, and identity, then it is an idol.”³

–Tim Keller

3. The Lawgiver deserves _____ in all we do (Ex. 20:7-11).

7 Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses His name.

8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: 9 You are to labor six days and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the foreigner who is within your gates. 11 For the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy.

Let’s look at the Third Commandment for a moment. Do you see how seriously God takes the misuse of His name? We may have grown up thinking this command is only about cursing or swearing oaths in God’s name, but we should realize that revering God’s name means much more.

To revere God’s name means we will not use His name recklessly. When we use God’s name to speak about Him or for Him, it is serious business. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, we are called the “ambassadors for Christ” and told that God is appealing through us on Christ’s behalf for the world to be reconciled to Him. We are the ones who are present in every situation speaking for the King. Using God’s name well means speaking it in ways that appeal to people to know Jesus and follow Him.

What are some ways God’s name is misused in the world?

Why does God take this so seriously?

In verses 8-11, God commanded a rest day each week. In commanding His people to keep the day holy, the Sabbath was to be set apart in both action and inaction. The other six days of the week were dominated by work to provide sustenance and to keep order. But God called for a pause to this provisional activity in order to focus on Him.

As Christians, we believe Jesus Christ has freed us from the technicalities of Sabbath law since He is the rest for our souls (see Col. 2:16-23). Still, there are principles in this Commandment we would do well to remember.

God Is One

The Bible affirms that God is one, as seen in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, otherwise known as the *Shema*. In both Old and New Testament times, the advocacy of monotheism (belief in one God) was contrary to the surrounding culture. Where most cultures practiced polytheism (belief in multiple gods) or henotheism (the worship of one god with the belief in multiple gods), the people of God knew, based upon God's self-revelation, that Yahweh, the Lord, is the only one true God.