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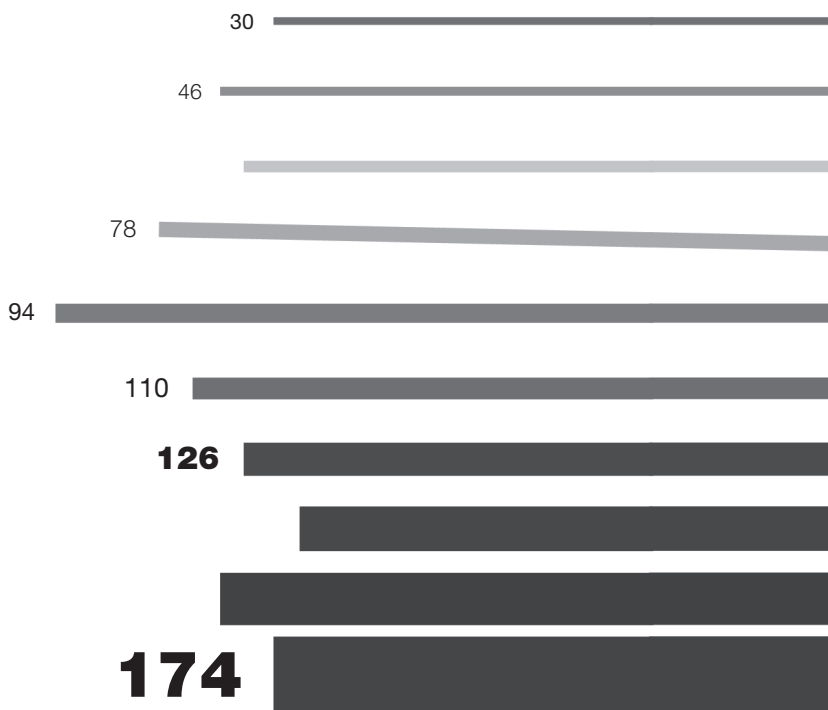
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Ten Words for God's Chosen People

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6 the ten words

14 I Am the LORD Your God

Don't Worship Other Gods

Don't Replace Me with Images

Don't Misuse My Name

Remember the Sabbath

Honor Your Parents...and Other People's Parents

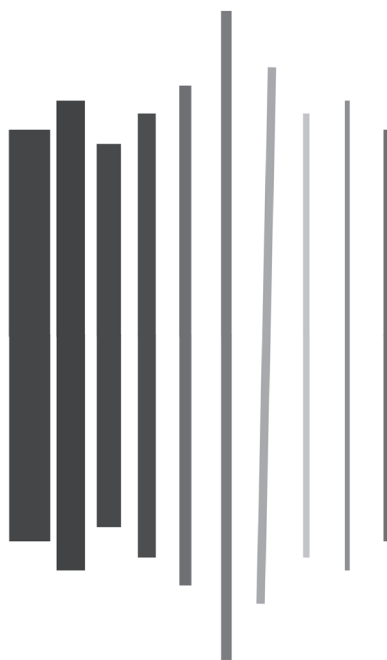
Don't Murder

Don't Commit Adultery

Don't Steal

Don't Lie or Gossip

Don't Covet



the ten words

The Ten Commandments aren't simply a list of laws or rules. Let's get that out of the way up front. It's no wonder the Hebrews called them the Ten Words. They're so much more than commandments.

If you read *The Kingdom Experiment* from The House Studio, you saw how the Beatitudes were the foundation of the entire Sermon on the Mount and ultimately the framework for teaching the Church how to live in and interact with the world. That foundation was built on this one when, after centuries of slavery, YHWH¹ led a poor, weak people out into the desert. Despite their complaints and persistent failure to listen, God chose these people as an example for the world. In God's design of this world, Israel was to be the model for all other people, showing them how to live as God intended.

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These ten words, ten statements, ten commandments allowed the Israelites to see the world from the Creator's perspective. These commandments provided Israel with a foundation to build upon as God's chosen people. Even if the world seemed to show that things worked differently, Israel knew creation worked as God revealed to them.

It's easy for us to go along "knowing" the Ten Commandments without ever taking the time to realize the great insight they possess for our lives. A copy of the Ten Commandments hangs on a wall at the US Supreme

¹ God's first name, pronounced "yah-way;" you can read about that in Exodus 3.

Court to symbolize the foundation of law. That might be a bit misplaced though. Simply hanging a list of rules doesn't mean we actually live by them; we should also have these words engraved on our minds to constantly remind us of the foundation for our actions and words.²

Back to this book. This is an introduction after all. Most people know what “no killing” and “no lying” mean, so I won't dwell on the obvious points. However, these commandments go much deeper than surface meanings; they became an increasingly vital part of Israelite society and were integrated into every aspect of life. *The Sinai Experiment* explores how the Ten Words should continue to shape the lives of God's people.

We'll also see the ways in which God's people, led by the Spirit, have expanded these commandments. For example, in the time of Moses, a married man committed adultery only if he slept with a married woman; a woman committed adultery if she slept with anyone who wasn't her husband. Today, men have the same responsibilities to their spouses in marriage. This equality, at least where adultery is concerned, is a step in the right direction.

One important note: we may struggle to understand the Old Testament in its proper context, but these sacred words were not challenged by Paul and the Gospels. Quite the opposite. The New Testament is dependent upon these Hebrew Scriptures. Occasionally, I've detoured from the Old Testament in order to note how Jesus built upon the Ten Commandments in his teaching—please don't hold it against me.

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The experiments in this book are an attempt to illustrate the ways in which the Ten Words continue to shape our everyday lives. You may not be comfortable with every one of them. You may even disagree with a few of them. That's why this book is designed to be experienced in community. Record your thoughts and share them. Our faith is a communal one; we lean on those around us to help us understand

² Many Jews still do just that—look up *phylacteries* some time.

what it means to be a Christian. The Ten Commandments have been a centering force for God's people since the beginning. My hope is that they continue to serve that function for us.

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.

11

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

"You shall not murder.

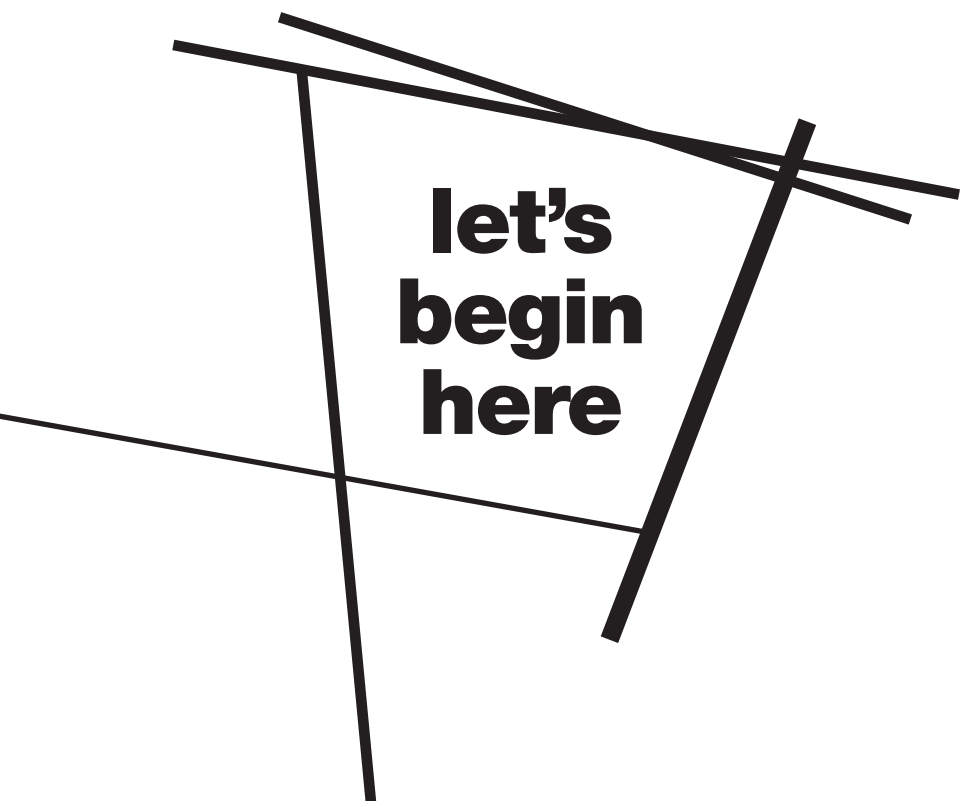
"You shall not commit adultery.

"You shall not steal.

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

"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 20:1-17

An abstract graphic consisting of several thick black lines that intersect to form a series of overlapping, irregular polygons. These lines create a frame around the central text, with some lines extending towards the edges of the page.

**let's
begin
here**

We know you hate directions. But you can always tear out this page and find your own way through the book.

it's plain and simple.

1 Read and discuss a chapter.

2 Each person choose one of six experiments to carry out . . . or make up some of your own.

14

3 Journal your thoughts on our pages. (Why else would we give you so much white space?)

4 Share your stories with the group next week.

I Am the LORD Your God

A Ten Commandments book with eleven chapters? What gives? Well, the Ten Commandments you learned as a child may differ from the ones your friends know, depending on whether you grew up Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. I've included every commandment you're familiar with, but the Jews consider this line the first commandment—and a very important one. I don't think they're wrong:

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

You weren't saved when you asked Jesus into your heart. You were saved when Jesus Christ died on the cross and was raised again. God has already done the saving. Our part is choosing to accept God's loving action and responding with a life of obedience. That's what you did when you prayed; it's what Christians do every day.

Circumstances were no different for Israel. The saving had already been done. God had led them out of Egypt. They had witnessed Pharaoh's army drown in the Red Sea. Their choice was accepting that a God who did all that really did have their best interests in mind. But not just their best interests; God was focused on showing the whole world how best to live in God's creation.

16 God brought Israel out of Egypt and four centuries of slavery, forming a ragtag bunch of grumbling slaves into a people. God used Israel as an example—their lives showed the world how well things went when they listened to God and how horrible things could get when they didn't. But this commandment isn't about reward and punishment. It's about teaching God's people the best way to live in the world. It's about showing everyone in all time that God is intimately involved with humanity.

One thing it's not about? Power. God didn't send down stone tablets with oppressive laws to show how much bigger and more powerful God

is than us. Everything God does is out of love. God loves the world, so we've been given the task of managing what God created. God loves us, so we've been given instructions on how to live well. God is invested in this relationship with creation and is faithful to provide all we need to do our part as a response to God's love.

talk



Living out these commandments requires trust in God and relationship with God. What does it mean for the LORD to be your God?

A covenant is not a one-sided arrangement—relationships are interactive. Do we owe God obedience? Can we repay what God has done for us? Does it even make sense to try?

Engage.

Find a couple you respect (but may not know all that well) who have been married for a number of years. Invite them over to share a meal or coffee with you. Discuss what it means to them to be faithful to each other. Try to go beyond the most obvious definition of faithfulness.

Journal your thoughts here.

Observe.

Offer to watch someone's kids for a whole day or a long evening. Think about how from childhood, our actions are determined by rules. How much does a child rely on his or her parents in order to know right and wrong?

Journal your thoughts here.

Listen.

All actions have consequences, both expected and unexpected. Seek out someone who's been in prison. If you're really brave, seek out someone who's still in prison. Ask this person how being incarcerated has affected his or her life.

Journal your thoughts here.

Speak.

Tell someone about the difference God's love has made in your life.

Choose something specific to share. Choose someone who hasn't heard something like this from you before.

Journal your thoughts here.

Reflect.

Pick up a copy of Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*. It's a long book, so feel free to rent the movie instead. Either way, take note of what the work says about sacrifice, selflessness, commitment, and relationship.

Journal your thoughts here.

Serve.

Choose someone you love and see regularly. Spend a day going out of your way to make his or her day better. How difficult is it to constantly put someone else before yourself? How much more difficult would the day have been if this person were not someone special to you?

Journal your thoughts here.