

The Law at Sinai

Sunday Plan

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 19–20

MEMORY VERSE

Exodus 20:2

OPTIONAL VIDEO

The Ten Commandments

<https://southside.cc/670-632>

We love God by obeying him.

For the Teacher

Read this before you teach. Last week the kids saw God fight for his people at the Red Sea. Today picks up the story a few weeks later. A free people needs to learn how to live free, and God brings them to a mountain called Sinai to show them how. The kids should leave with one idea firmly in place.

KEY TRUTH

We love God by obeying him.

Rescue comes before rules. This is the most important framing of the lesson, and it's easy to miss. God doesn't give the Ten Commandments to people who are trying to earn his love. He gives them to people he has *already* rescued. Look at how Exodus 20 opens: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." The commandments come *after* "I'm the God who saved you." The kids need to hear the order. Rescue, then rules. Love, then obedience. Otherwise the commandments sound like a test, and they aren't.

Why Sinai is loud. Exodus 19 describes thunder, lightning, smoke, fire, a mountain that shakes. The volume isn't punishment. It's God showing his people who he is — holy, powerful, completely serious — before he tells them how to live. The kids should picture this. It's not a quiet handing-out of rules. It's God arriving with a sound nobody can ignore.

The two tables. The Ten Commandments split cleanly: the first four are about loving God (no other gods, no idols, honor his name, keep the Sabbath); the last six are about loving people (honor parents, don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, don't covet). When Jesus later says the whole Law is "love God, love your neighbor," he's reading the two tables. You don't need to make the kids count which is which — but you should know it as you teach, because every commandment is about love.

What we're skipping and why. The full Sinai narrative goes through Exodus 24 with the covenant ceremony, the elders eating with God on the mountain, and Moses going up for forty days. That's a lot. Today stays in chapters 19–20 — the arrival, the warning, the commandments, and the people's response. The golden calf, Moses on the mountain, and the tabernacle are in later weeks of the Exodus story.

Don't soften the seventh commandment. Exodus 20:14 is "You shall not commit adultery." The kids don't need a sex talk in Sunday school, and that's not what this commandment is mostly doing for them anyway. The simplest age-appropriate version: "Be faithful in marriage. Husbands and wives keep their promises to each other." Move on. If a kid asks more, redirect to the parents.

Repeat the bottom line all morning. Say it at least six times. Have the kids say it back. Write it on the board. End with it.

MATERIALS

- Bibles for every student
- Whiteboard or large paper, markers
- Pencils, crayons or colored pencils
- A small flashlight
- A bicycle or sports helmet (if you can grab one — optional)
- Activity sheets (printed in advance from this week's activities — pick what you'll use)

1. Gather

Welcome the kids back. Tell them today picks up a few weeks after last week's story. God's people are out of Egypt for real now — walking through the wilderness, free for the first time in four hundred years.

ASK

What's a rule at school or at home that, when you really think about it, is actually for your good?

Let two or three kids answer. Steer toward: rules about looking both ways, wearing helmets, being kind, not lying. Then tell them: today God is going to give his people some rules — and they're not rules to make life harder. They're rules because he loves them and wants them to live well.

Write the bottom line on the board:

SAY

We love God by obeying him.

2. The Story

Setting the Stage

Tell them, in your own words: God's people had been walking through the wilderness for about three months. They were tired, they were free, but they didn't really know yet what it meant to be God's people. So God brought them to a mountain called Mount Sinai. And something happened there that they would tell their grandchildren about for the next thousand years.

The Mountain

Have everyone open to Exodus 19:3. Pick a confident reader.

Exodus 19:3–6

DISCUSSION

1. Look at verse 5. What does God call his people if they keep his covenant?

→ *His "treasured possession." Make them find it themselves. The word "treasured" matters — the kids are valuable to God, not because they earn it, but because he chose them.*

2. What had God already done for these people before he asked them to obey?

→ *Rescued them out of Egypt. He says it in verse 4 — "I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." Rescue comes before rules. That's the whole order.*

Now have a different student read the next passage:

Exodus 19:16–19

ASK

What did the mountain look and sound like?

Thunder, lightning, thick cloud, smoke, fire, a loud trumpet, the mountain shaking. Loud. Big. Impossible to ignore.

SAY

God wasn't being scary on purpose. He was showing his people who he is — holy, powerful, completely serious — before he told them how to live. When the God of the universe is about to speak, you pay attention.

The Ten Commandments

Have everyone turn to Exodus 20. Tell them: God is going to give his people ten commandments. They're going to read them out loud, one by one. Pick ten students for this — one per commandment

— or read in pairs. (If your class is small, just go around twice.)

Exodus 20:1–17

After the reading, write the ten commandments on the board in short form (or have a student do it as you go):

1. No other gods.
2. No idols.
3. Honor God’s name.
4. Keep the Sabbath.
5. Honor your parents.
6. Do not murder.
7. Be faithful in marriage.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not lie.
10. Do not covet.

NOTE

“Covet” is a hard word. Define it on the board: *to want something that belongs to someone else so badly that it makes you bitter.*

Two Halves

Walk the list with them. Point at the board. The first four commandments are about how we love God — no other gods, no idols, his name, his day. The last six are about how we love people — parents, their lives, their families, their things, their reputation, even what’s in their closet. Every single commandment is about love. That’s why the bottom line works: we love God by obeying him.

How the People Respond

Have one student read the last short passage:

Exodus 20:18–20

DISCUSSION

1. How did the people feel when they saw the thunder and the mountain?

→ *Scared. Terrified. They stood at a distance.*

2. What did Moses tell them in verse 20?

→ *Don’t be afraid. God came to test you, and to put the fear of him before you, so you wouldn’t sin. The “fear” Moses is talking about isn’t being scared of God — it’s taking him seriously.*

3. The Point

Say the bottom line again, with the kids:

SAY

We love God by obeying him.

The Flashlight and the Helmet

Hold up the flashlight. (If you brought a helmet, hold that up too.)

SAY

Rules are not punishments. A flashlight isn't a punishment — it helps you see in the dark. A helmet isn't a punishment — it protects your head. God's commandments are like that. He gave them because he loves his people and wants them to live well. When we obey him, we're not earning his love. We're showing it.

The Memory Verse

Have everyone turn to Exodus 20:2. Read it together:

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:2

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

Read it together three ways: all together normally, all together in a whisper, then once with each kid pointing at themselves on the words "your God."

SAY

Look at where this verse is. It comes before the Ten Commandments. God says, "I'm the God who rescued you" before he says "here's how to live." That order matters. He saved his people first. Then he gave them his rules. We love God by obeying him — and we can only love him because he loved us first.

What This Means For Us**DISCUSSION**

1. Which commandment do you think is hardest for kids your age? Why?

→ *Listen for: honoring parents, not lying, not coveting, not being mean to others. Don't rush them — let the honest answer surface.*

2. What's one way you could obey God this week and show him you love him?

→ *Listen for specifics. "Be nice" is too vague. Push for: tell the truth even when it's hard, help your mom without being asked, stop being jealous of your friend's stuff, pray instead of panicking. Specific moves are the answer.*

Closing Prayer**PRAY**

God, you rescued your people out of Egypt before you ever gave them a single rule. You loved us first. Thank you for giving us your commandments — not to make life harder, but to show us how to live well and how to love you back. This week, help us obey you in the small moments at home and at school, because we love you. Amen.

4. The Work

Pick one or more activities from this week's menu. Print enough copies for each kid in advance. The kids don't have to do all of them — pick what fits the group's energy and what time you have left.

The menu for this week:

- **At Mount Sinai** — coloring page of the mountain in thunder and smoke, with the memory verse.
- **Ten Words from God** — word search with names and key words from the Sinai story (includes a sneak peek of next week).

- **One Way I'll Obey** — drawing prompt where the kids pick one commandment and draw what obeying it looks like in their week.
- **Words to Remember** — fill-in-the-blanks recall using the kids' Bibles.

The full production specs for each activity are in this week's activities file.

NOTE

While the kids work, sit with them. Ask one or two what they're working on. Reinforce the bottom line one more time before class ends.

What Comes Next Week

The kids will see what happens when God's people forget the commandments almost as fast as they get them — the golden calf story, and how God responds to a people who break their promises the very first chance they get.