



Introduction to the Series

Ten Commandments

Primary Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21

Why is this topic important?

What are the essential topics that children must be exposed to? Obviously, one of the most important is the knowledge of salvation, grasping the person and work of Jesus. What other topics would you want to include in the spiritual formation of your children? At the top of the list needs to be a clear picture of what the Christian life looks like. This begins with the knowledge of the Ten Commandments.

In its short form, Jesus summarized the law as *loving God and loving people*. More specifically, the Bible gives us the Ten Commandments to guide our Christian lives. Children are capable of learning, even memorizing these Ten Commandments. In this series, the kids will learn the Ten Commandments and how to apply them.

How do the numbering systems differ?

Denominations number the Ten Commandments differently. There are more than ten imperative statements in the reading of the Ten Commandments. If you were to check Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21, you would find fourteen imperatives. Some of these are easily grouped together such as *“Remember the Sabbath day... Six days you shall labor...the seventh day is a Sabbath...On it you shall not so any work...”* (NIV). Other groupings, however, are not as obvious. Which are the Ten Commandments and for that matter, how do we even know there are ten?

We arrive at the conclusion that there are ten commandments because in passages like Exodus 34:28, it refers to Moses having received ten. These verses don't actually say there are ten commandments, rather they refer to ten WORDS. The Hebrew is *eser dabar*, which means – ten words. In English, it is often translated as “the Ten

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Commandments.” Exodus 34:28 reads in the NIV, “*And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments.*” God’s Word translation says “*The Lord told you about the terms of his promise, the ten commandments, which he commanded you to do. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets.*” (Deuteronomy 4:13) Since these passages refer to the ten words and not Ten Commandments, this opens the possibility that not all of the “words” are imperative statements. By Jewish reckoning, for example, the first commandment isn’t a commandment at all. It is the first sentence of the covenant... “*I am the LORD your God...*”

What are the different arrangements of the Ten Commandments?

Given the different possibilities for arranging the Ten Commandments, three major groupings or numberings have emerged. These include the following:

1. the Jewish interpretation,
2. the interpretation based on Augustine and used by Roman Catholics and Lutherans, and
3. the popular evangelical ordering that is used by the Greek Orthodox Church and later adopted by most Reformed denominations.

The following chart lists these accordingly:

Comparing Numbering Systems

Commandment Number	Jewish System	Augustinian System (Catholics & Lutherans)	Orthodox System (Greek Orthodox and most Protestant Churches)
Introduction	And God spoke all these words, saying,	And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the LORD your God.”	And God spoke all these words, saying “I am the LORD your God.”
1 st	“I am the LORD your God.”	“You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image.”	“You shall have no other gods before me.”
2 nd	“You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image.”	“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.”	“You shall not make for yourself a graven image.”
3 rd	“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.”	“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”	“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.”

4 th	"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."	"Honor your father and your mother."	"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."
5 th	"Honor your father and your mother."	"You shall not kill."	"Honor your father and your mother."
6 th	"You shall not kill."	"You shall not commit adultery."	"You shall not kill."
7 th	"You shall not commit adultery."	"You shall not steal."	"You shall not commit adultery."
8 th	"You shall not steal."	"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."	"You shall not steal."
9 th	"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."	"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife."	"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."
10 th	"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire anything that is your neighbor's."	"You shall not desire anything that is your neighbor's."	"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or you shall not desire anything that is your neighbor's."

How will you teach the Ten Commandments?

We suggest that you follow the numbering tradition of your denomination. Note, as well, that there are good reasons why they are numbered in different ways. Please be slow to criticize other numbering systems. Regardless of how they are numbered, the same material is learned in all of them.