



Lesson 3: Program

I. **LOVING** ~ *Starter (15 Min)*

- A. Step One: Read through the Ten Commandments below, looking for the ones that are most challenging for you to follow.
 1. Worship only the Lord God.
 2. Don't worship idols.
 3. Don't take the Lord's name in vain.
 4. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.
 5. Honor your parents.
 6. Do not commit murder.
 7. Do not commit adultery.
 8. Do not steal.
 9. Do not lie.
 10. Do not covet what other people have.
- B. Step Two: List the **four** commandments that are hardest for you to follow.
- C. Step Three: Look over the four you identified and write down **two** that most challenge you.

Share with one or two persons, then share with whole group:

1. What did you discover about yourself as you identified the hardest commandments to follow?
2. What does your 'two most challenging commandments' say about you at this time in your life?

II. **LEARNING** ~

- A. **In the Know (15 Min) ~ Read aloud, if more than 7, break into groups of 4 to discuss.**

In recovery support groups, the phrase "working the steps" or "working the program" is used to describe how a participant goes through a process of recovery under the direct supervision of a sponsor. Likewise, in cardiac or other physical rehabilitation programs, there is a prescribed set of exercises and activities that the person goes through, a program



the individual “works,” also under the supervision of a trained specialist. So a fundamental component of rehab is a program. A second critical component is people who support and encourage you as you follow the program.

This study proposes that the Ten Commandments form the basis of our program of Christian living. Indeed, for Christians, those are bedrock. Jesus himself taught that those who love him keep his commandments. We study Scripture, pray, take Communion, worship, and engage with those in need, not as an end in themselves. We do so because they are means of grace—our actions transform us and draw us closer to God and one another.

The Ten Commandments make up our ten-step program as followers of Jesus Christ. This is why the Ten Commandments are among the first things we teach our children. Following these commandments is about character. They are about what we stand for as people of God and as community members. These are foundational principles for living in community with one another.

Share your thoughts about the Ten Commandments.

1. In what ways are the Ten Commandments foundational for Christians?
2. How does following the commandments allow you to grow in your faith?

B. Reflection on the Scriptures (20 Min) ~ One person read the following passages and another read the background.

Then God spoke all these words:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.



You shall not steal.
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.
Exodus 20:1-17

Background:

Keeping the commandments was the way the Israelites revealed their love and gratitude for all that God had done, was doing, and would do for them in the future. They referred to these not as commandments, but as "instructions for life." The commandments were seen as a gift from God. Thus the Psalmist could declare, "Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the **law** of the Lord, on his **law** they meditate day and night." (Psalm 1:1-2; see also 119:97 NRSV)

In the New Testament, Jesus boiled down the law in what we call the Greatest Commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40)

Questions for Discussion ~ If more than 7, break into groups of 4 to discuss.

1. How does being part of a community of faith help you meditate on the law?
2. What is the link between a person's love of God and of neighbor?

III. LEADING ~ Making it Personal (10 Min)

- A. Similar to a rehab plan, the Ten Commandments were designed to strengthen the character of Israelites. How do the practices of spiritual disciplines (prayer, worship, reading the Bible, acts of mercy, and so on) become a spiritual formation plan for allowing God to work in us and through us?
- B. Oftentimes, the results of a diet or rehab plan seem so slow that we fail to notice them (even though others might). Might this also be the case when it comes to a growth in maturity as a Christian? What role do instructions and commandments play for Christians today?

Close in Prayer (5 Min)