*The Big Picture*

*Study 4: God’s Commands to Israel*

*Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Galatians 3:10-14*

**Icebreaker**

Go around the circle, everyone say your name and answer this question: What were you like as a kid growing up? (eg. were you a good kid, rebellious, shy, funny, etc)

**Introduction**

Tonight we are going to read a story from the Bible together. As Christians, we study the Bible because we believe that it is God’s word to us. We believe that humans wrote the different books of the Bible, but they did that with God’s help and guidance. God gave us the Bible so that we could use it to learn who he is and understand His plans. So the Bible is full of lots of different stories and teachings, but they all help tell a bigger story about God and about the world we live in, and how He is going to restore the brokenness we see through Jesus. It is the story of God and the story of us!

In this series, we are going to look at the big picture story we see in the Bible, starting from the very beginning. We won’t cover the whole Bible (because we won’t have time for that!) but we will look at some important passages to help understand the story of God. And we will see how the entire story leads up to Jesus. So because we believe that God wants to help us understand His story, we are going to pray and then we will get started!

**Pray**

**Intro to the Passage**

Last week, we watched a video about the story of the Exodus and learned about how God brought the Israelite people out of slavery in Egypt. He sent a man named Moses to lead His people to freedom and did some incredible things to show both the Egyptians and the Israelites His power. After 400 years in slavery, they were now free, but they needed some direction on what was going to come next. Tonight, we are going to read about the commands God gave to the Israelites and see how they were supposed to go from being an unorganized group of ex-slaves to a new and healthy nation that would bless the world and point people towards God.

*Have everyone read the passage silently to themselves, and write down questions they have as they read. Then, read the passage out loud, each person reading one verse.*

**Now we are going to look at questions to help us understand this passage.**

**1. The first passage from Exodus is what we call the Ten Commandments…have you heard of these before? Were there any of the commandments that you didn’t understand?** *Let them share and then discuss as a group.*

**2. Did any of the commandments seem surprising to you, or strange? Why?**

**3. The fourth thing God commands the Israelites to do is to remember the Sabbath and to rest on the seventh day of the week. Why do you think God commands people to rest?**  Moses explained that after God created the world, he rested on the seventh day to *enjoy* his creation. He wants us to spend time resting so we can worship Him and depend on Him. It seems risky to give up a whole day of work (especially to that culture), but God wants us to trust in HIM to provide rather than doing everything ourselves. It is important to rest and spend time with our friends and family enjoying the things God has blessed us with.

**4. What do you think about these commands? Do they seem fair or good to you? Why or why not?**

**5. Why do you think God gave the Israelites these commands?** God wanted them to be different from every other nation and group of people. He wanted them to be a blessing to the rest of the world, so they needed to learn how they should act in order to be different. It wasn’t that God wanted to make life difficult for them; he merely wanted to show them how to be the community they were called to be. If they followed these commands, they would have peace and harmony with each other and probably even their enemies. And He commands them to respect Him and not put any other gods before Him because He is the ONLY God. He wants them to know Him and not forget all He has done for them so that they will fulfill their purpose and enjoy His blessings. His commands are a warning against falling into a trap of worshipping many gods, like most other cultures did at the time. If the people of Israel obeyed God, they would become a great nation that blessed the world and honored God.

**6. In the second passage, what did Moses tell the people about God’s commands?** He said that if they loved the Lord and obeyed Him, then they would prosper as a nation and things would go well for them. But if they didn’t obey Him and turned away to other gods, things would go very badly…they would be destroyed as a nation. He basically says they must choose between life (obedience) and death (disobedience).

**7. Christians talk a lot about how God loves people. So if God is supposed to be so loving and kind, why do you think he cares about whether or not people obey His rules? Can’t he just love people no matter what?**  God’s commands help fix the brokenness in our world. People are naturally self-centered and do things that benefit themselves, even if it hurts other people. His commands help prevent people from being selfish and hurting others. And the commands also direct people towards Him. That may seem self-centered or egotistical of God, but He is the one who created all people, and He created them to have a relationship with Him. We (as Christians) believe that we have an emptiness inside of us that only God can fill…so when God tries to lead people to Him, He is trying to lead people to the only thing that can truly satisfy them. So it is actually very kind and loving of Him. If everyone was able to follow these commands, don’t you think our world would be a better place?

**8. In the third passage, in verse 11, it says that it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. Why do you think that is?** It is helpful to look at the verse right before it…the verse says that everyone who does not observe and obey *all* the commands that are written in God’s law are cursed. There is no one who is able to obey ALL God’s commands (think about this…everyone has at lied at the very least). So no one can be made right with God by obeying the law (because it is impossible to fully obey).

**9. So how does the passage say that someone can be made right?** It says that people can be made right with God through faith. **What do you think that means?** We can never obey the law perfectly, but God doesn’t require that in order to have a relationship with Him. He DOES want us to follow it, but He knows we will mess up sometimes, so the key is turning to God in those times and confessing how you messed up. The key is having faith and believing that God is loving and will forgive you. The reason He can forgive us is because of Jesus. So another way to look at it is to have faith in what Jesus did.

**10. How does it say Jesus saves us from the curse that we deserve (for messing up)?** It says Christ saved us from the curse when he died on the cross because he took the punishment we deserved…he took our place, as a sacrifice. We can’t perfectly obey the law, but Jesus did. He was able to take our place and take the punishment we deserved. Christianity is all about believing in what Jesus did and receiving His free offer of life and salvation, not just following a certain set of rules (because we can’t do that well anyways!)

**11. If people couldn’t keep the law and it couldn’t actually make them right with God, why do you think God gave it to them in the first place?** First of all, the law showed the people of Israel how God intends for us to live in general, like we talked about earlier. Also, the law serves as a kind of mirror for people. Jesus came to save people, but you have to know you NEED saving before you become interested in Jesus. The law shows us all the ways we fail God and disobey him, helping us recognize that we NEED some other way to get right with Him. We can’t do it on our own.

**12. Have you ever felt like you needed a way to make things right (because of things you’ve done that are wrong?)**

**13. What do you think these passages teach us about ourselves?** They help us see the way God intends for us to live as humans. They also help us see that the only way we can be made right with God is through Jesus.

**14. What do they teach us about God?** The passages help us see how God had a plan for Israel, and how He has a plan for how we should live. It shows us how good and gracious God is because even though he gave us His law, we still messed up and disobeyed, and he still loved us enough to send Jesus as a way to fix it all. God gives us commands to follow, but following Jesus is so much more than a list of do’s and don’ts…God wants to bless us!

**15. Do you have any other questions?**

**Conclusion**

While God gave Israel (and us) commands to follow, He knows we can’t do it perfectly. The law shows us our need for God and teach us how He desires for us to live. We can’t fix our relationship with Him by obeying it because we can never obey it perfectly. That is why we needed Jesus. God sent Jesus as a sacrifice for us. Disobedience to the law requires punishment in order to make up for it, so Jesus died on the cross in order to take OUR punishment. And all we have to do to be made right with God is turn away from our old way of living and believe in what Jesus did for us. By choosing to follow Jesus and give Him control, you may be saying no to some things in life, but you are saying yes to the God who loves you and created you and has a plan for you. It is definitely worth it! We are out of time tonight, but next week we will look at what happened next with the people of Israel…and it gets interesting!

**Pray**