

Read Exodus 20:1-21

What – This scripture needs no introduction. Most recognize it by the reference, and if not, immediately know the Ten Commandments when they are referenced. They have been a powerful symbol of God's ideals since God gave them to Moses and have been a source of controversy recently in our nation. They are the basis for our modern legal system, no matter how much some may want to deny that, and they identify for us a part of God's character. Moses recorded these at the request of God to show the people that God was a God who loved His people enough to tell them what would help them prosper and what would not. Later in the Old Testament, we see just how smart God was when we recognize that the Jews broke nearly every one of the ten regularly. Rather than a list of rules, God intended this list to be a warning about what temptations and sins we need to be aware of. With God, we always see grace shining through, even in the midst of His LAW.

Why – God wrote these to give the Israelites guidance. Their desperate need for guidance is discovered if we read just a bit past this section. It took God a little while to put the words of the Law on the tablets. In addition to the 10 Commandments, God wrote all the Law on the tablets, almost everything we read from Exodus 20-31 (see Exodus 21-31). The people became so impatient that they built a Golden Calf to worship in God's place because Moses was taking too long (see Exodus 32). God finished in a hurry and sent Moses back when He saw what the people were doing. Sometimes we mistake the Ten Commandments for a "to do" list for good behavior. God never meant them to be that. As with the impatient and wayward Israelites, He gave them to us so that we might remember Him, His character, and His desire to see us live His gift of life to us to the fullest.

WOW – The Ten Commandments are important for several reasons. First is the glimpse into God's character. Look at verse 12. God says that He is telling us this, "that it may go well with us." These are not rules to please Him, but an instruction manual to help us get the most out of what He has given us. What an amazing concept! God gave us boundaries TO HELP US. It says a lot about His love, doesn't it? Second is the simplicity of the section. If you break the Commandments up, they only deal with two areas of life. The first four deal with our relationship with God and the rest deal with our relationships with the people around us. Think about all the scriptures that say things like, "I will be their God and they will be my people," (Jer 7:23) or, "draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8). Our primary task in the Christian life is to seek God and try to know Him more. Besides that, we are to treat others like Christ treats us. Think of scriptures that say things like, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34). The Ten Commandments have always echoed something that Jesus made perfectly clear. The life of following God is not easy, but it is simple. Love God and love others. If you are doing those things, you will find yourself doing God's will.