

The Book of Deuteronomy, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 4: The Ten Commandments Restated

Deuteronomy 5:1-33

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this chapter sits at a fault line. The Ten Commandments are the covenant God made with Israel at Horeb (5:2-3), and nine of these ten words express moral truths that are timeless and are restated as binding under the New Covenant. The Sabbath command is the exception: it was given to Israel as a sign of that covenant and is not carried over to Christians as law. Our aim is to honor the abiding moral weight of these commands while refusing to bind the Old Covenant, with its Sabbath, on people for whom Christ has fulfilled and taken away the law (Colossians 2:14-17; Hebrews 8-10). We will let the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, stand on its own apostolic footing rather than dressing it up as a Christian Sabbath.

Just as important, this chapter aims at the heart. The commandments are not a ladder we climb to earn God's favor; they are the shape of a life that already belongs to the God who redeemed Israel out of Egypt (5:6) and who redeems us in Christ. We want the student to feel both the goodness of God's moral order and the terror of the gap that the people felt at the mountain, so that the gospel lands as good news: the God too holy to approach has come near in Jesus, the mediator better than Moses.

So the lesson holds two things together. It teaches plainly that the Old Law given through Moses is fulfilled in Christ and not bound on Christians, and it presses the moral truths of these commands into the conscience of the believer who now lives under grace. Law-keeping was never the gospel; a transformed heart that loves God and neighbor always was.

Question 1

Student Question:

What does Moses emphasize in Deuteronomy 5:1-5 about the covenant, the generation he is addressing, and the way God spoke to Israel at Horeb?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Moses opens with a summons that is also a teaching method: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them" (5:1). Notice the chain: hear, learn, observe. Knowledge is not the goal; obedient love is. He is preparing a new generation to enter a land their parents never saw, and he will not let them inherit the land without first owning the covenant.

The striking claim is in 5:2-3: "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, who are all of us here alive today". Many of his hearers were small children at Sinai or not yet born, yet Moses insists the covenant is theirs. He is not denying history; he is pressing covenant solidarity. To belong to the people of God is to be drawn into His dealings with them, not to watch from the sidelines.

Moses also recalls the manner of the revelation: God spoke "face to face... out of the midst of the fire" (5:4), while Moses himself stood between the Lord and the people to declare His word, "for you were afraid because of the fire" (5:5). Already the role of mediator appears. The people could not bear the unmediated voice of God, and that need will run like a thread through Scripture until it is answered in Christ.

This sets the tone for everything that follows. The commandments are not abstract ethics floating free; they are covenant words from a God who has acted in history, spoken audibly, and bound a people to Himself. For us, Romans 15:4 reminds us this was written for our instruction. We read it not to place ourselves under the Old Covenant, but to learn the unchanging character of the God who still calls us to hear, learn, and do.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Covenant solidarity: belonging to God's people means owning His Word personally
- The pattern hear, learn, observe as the goal of all Bible study
- God as a God who speaks and acts in real history
- The early appearance of the need for a mediator
- The Old Testament written for our instruction (Romans 15:4)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the covenant was made "with us" and not only with the fathers?
- Why does Moses link hearing, learning, and doing so tightly?
- How does the people's fear of God's voice prepare us for Christ?

Question 2

Student Question:

Moses says God made this covenant "with us, who are all of us here alive today". Where do you tend to keep God's claims at arm's length, as if they belonged to other people or other times?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

There is a quiet temptation to treat God's commands as belonging to someone else: another era, another personality type, people more religious than we are. Moses confronts that head on by saying the covenant is "with us, who are all of us here alive today". The word of God is never merely historical information; it is a living claim on the person reading it now.

Ask where you keep God at arm's length. Perhaps you admire the Bible's ethics in the abstract but resist their reach into your finances, your speech, your marriage, your private screen. Perhaps you think repentance is for people whose sins are louder than yours. The new generation at Moab had to stop hiding behind their parents' story and stand under the covenant themselves.

The cure is not guilt but ownership. When we say "the Lord made this covenant with us" we stop being spectators of grace and start being participants in it. That is exactly the posture the gospel invites: not admiring Jesus from a distance, but being buried with Him and raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Treating Scripture as information rather than a personal claim
- Hiding behind others' faith or others' sins
- Owning the covenant personally versus spectating
- Areas we fence off from God's authority

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you read the Bible as if it were about other people?
- What part of your life have you quietly fenced off from God?
- What would change if you said today, "this is to me"?

Question 3

Student Question:

What do the first four commandments (5:6-15) reveal about who God is and what He rightly requires concerning worship, idolatry, His name, and rest?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The first four commandments order our life toward God. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (5:6) is the foundation: redemption comes first, then commands. God does not say, keep these and I will save you; He says, I have saved you, now live as Mine. Obedience flows from rescue, not the reverse. That order is the heartbeat of grace in both covenants.

The first command, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (5:7), claims exclusive allegiance. The second, against carved images (5:8-10), guards how He is worshiped; God will not be reduced to anything we can shape with our hands or imagine in our minds. The third, against taking His name "in vain" (5:11), guards His name from being emptied of weight, treated as a tool, a curse, or a casual word.

The fourth command concerns the Sabbath (5:12–15). Here Deuteronomy’s version differs from Exodus: the ground of the Sabbath is not creation but redemption, “remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt”. Israel rested, and gave rest to servants and animals, because God had given them rest from bondage. This command was a covenant sign given to Israel; we will weigh its place under the New Covenant carefully at question nine.

Together these four reveal a God who is jealous in the holy sense (5:9), who will share His glory with no rival, who is gracious to thousands of those who love Him and keep His commandments (5:10). They teach us that worship is not a buffet of our preferences but a response to the character and redemption of the one true God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Redemption precedes command (5:6): grace then obedience
- Exclusive allegiance to the one true God
- God will not be reduced to images of our making
- Reverence for the name of God against emptying it
- The Sabbath grounded in redemption from Egypt (treated fully at Q9)

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God remind Israel of the exodus before giving commands?
- How can we empty God’s name today without ever cursing?
- What does it mean that God is jealous for His own glory?

Question 4

Student Question:

Take the command against idolatry honestly: what functions as a rival to God in your own affections, time, or trust right now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Idolatry sounds like a sin for other cultures until we define it honestly. An idol is anything that takes the place that belongs to God: anything we trust to keep us, anything we serve to feel secure, anything we will not surrender. Few of us carve statues, but all of us are tempted to build them in the heart.

The exodus framing helps us see it. Israel had been slaves, and God set them free; an idol is a return to slavery under a god that cannot save. When approval, money, success, comfort, romance, or even family becomes the thing we cannot live without, it begins to rule us the way Pharaoh once ruled Israel. It promises life and delivers bondage.

Test your affections gently but truthfully. What do you reach for when you are anxious? What loss would feel like the end of the world? Where does your time and money flow when no one is

watching? Those answers locate your functional gods. The first command is also the first gospel invitation: come back to the God who actually redeems, and let the idols go.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Idolatry redefined as misplaced trust and ultimate love
- How good things become rival gods
- Idols as a return to bondage
- Diagnosing the heart by where money, time, and worry flow

Discussion Prompts

- What do you reach for first when you are afraid?
- What loss would feel unsurvivable, and what does that reveal?
- What would it look like to dethrone that rival this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

What do the last six commandments (5:16–21) reveal about how God designed human life together, and what does it say that He grounds them in a covenant relationship rather than mere social usefulness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The last six commandments order our life toward our neighbor. They begin in the home: “Honor your father and your mother” (5:16), the only command of the ten with a promise attached. The home is the first society, and a people who despise parental authority will not long honor any authority, including God’s. Paul lifts this command directly into Christian teaching (Ephesians 6:1–3).

Then come the great protections of human life and trust: do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness (5:17–20). Each one guards something God treasures: life made in His image, the one-flesh covenant of marriage, the property and labor of others, and truth itself, on which all human community depends. These are not arbitrary; they describe a world ordered by love.

The tenth command, against coveting (5:21), reaches inward, naming the desire that drives the outward sins. It exposes that God’s law was always after the heart, not merely the hands. Jesus will make this explicit, tracing murder back to anger and adultery back to lust (Matthew 5:21–30).

Crucially, these duties are grounded in covenant relationship with God, not mere social usefulness. We do not refrain from murder and theft simply because society runs more smoothly that way; we honor our neighbor because our neighbor bears the image of the God

who redeemed us. Strip the vertical relationship away and the horizontal commands lose their root. Jesus tied the two great commands together for exactly this reason (Matthew 22:37–40).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Honoring parents as the seedbed of all rightful authority
- The sanctity of life, marriage, property, and truth
- Coveting as the inner root of outward sin
- Neighbor-love grounded in God, not mere social order
- Love of God and love of neighbor held together (Matthew 22:37–40)

Discussion Prompts

- Why is honoring parents the foundation for honoring all authority?
- How does the tenth command expose the other nine?
- Why must neighbor-love be rooted in love for God?

Question 6

Student Question:

The command against coveting reaches past actions into the desires of the heart. Where does discontent or craving for what is not yours quietly shape your inner life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Coveting is the quietest sin and the most respectable. No one sees it; it leaves no obvious wreckage at first. Yet the tenth command names it precisely because it is the engine room of so much else. The eye lingers, the heart aches for what belongs to another, and discontent begins its slow work.

Notice how specific Moses gets: your neighbor's wife, house, field, servant, ox, donkey, "anything that is your neighbor's" (5:21). God meets us where we actually crave, not in vague generalities. In our day the list might read: their marriage, their home, their following, their body, their career, their ease. Comparison is the thief that turns God's gifts to us into grievances against Him.

The antidote to covetousness is not gritted-teeth suppression but grateful contentment, learned in the presence of the God who gives. Paul learned to be content in any state (Philippians 4:11–13). Where craving rules, gratitude has gone quiet. Naming the specific thing you covet, and then thanking God specifically for what He has given, begins to break its grip.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Covetousness as a hidden, respectable sin
- Comparison turning gifts into grievances

- Discontent as quiet distrust of God's goodness
- Gratitude and contentment as the God-given antidote

Discussion Prompts

- What do you find yourself comparing and craving most?
- How has discontent crept into your view of God's gifts?
- What specific gratitude could you practice this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

What happened when the people heard God's voice (5:22–27), and what does their terror and request for a mediator reveal about the holiness of God and the distance between Him and sinful people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After speaking the ten words “with a loud voice” from the fire, cloud, and thick darkness (5:22), God added no more directly to the assembled people. The scene overwhelmed them. The mountain burned, the elders and heads of the tribes came near, and they cried out, “the Lord our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire” (5:24).

Their next words are revealing: “Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore, then we shall die” (5:25). They sensed, rightly, that sinful people cannot stand in the unmediated presence of a holy God and live. Their fear was not cowardice; it was true theology felt in the body.

So they asked for a mediator: “You go near and hear all that the Lord our God may say, and tell us all that the Lord our God says to you, and we will hear and do it” (5:27). And God approved their request, “They are right in all that they have spoken” (5:28). The holiness of God and the sinfulness of people created a gap that the law could reveal but never bridge.

Hebrews 12:18–24 reads this scene as the very contrast that magnifies the gospel. We have not come to a mountain that may not be touched, blazing with fire and darkness; we have come to Mount Zion, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, whose blood speaks better things. The terror at Horeb is meant to make us long for the nearness we have in Christ, who lets us draw near with confidence (Hebrews 4:16).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The holiness of God and the danger of His unmediated presence
- Sinful people cannot stand before God and live
- God's approval of their request for a mediator

- The law reveals the gap but cannot close it
- Sinai contrasted with Mount Zion and Christ the better mediator (Hebrews 12)

Discussion Prompts

- Why was the people's fear actually sound theology?
- What gap does this scene expose that the law could not close?
- How does Christ answer the longing for a mediator?

Question 8

Student Question:

The people said, "Speak to us... and we will hear and do it". Where is the gap in your own life between hearing God's Word and actually doing it, and what feeds that gap?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The people said the right words, "we will hear and do it" (5:27), and meant them in the moment. Yet the rest of Deuteronomy, and Israel's whole history, shows how far the gap can run between sincere hearing and actual doing. We know that gap from the inside. We resolve, we are moved, we even weep, and then Monday comes.

What feeds the gap? Sometimes it is forgetfulness; the fire fades and the resolve fades with it. Sometimes it is a divided heart that wants both God and the idol. Sometimes it is treating conviction itself as if it were obedience, mistaking feeling stirred for actually changing. James warns against being a hearer who is not a doer, like a man who looks in a mirror and forgets his face (James 1:22-25).

The gospel does not close this gap by trying harder; it closes it by a new heart and the indwelling Spirit who works in us both to will and to do (Philippians 2:13). Our part is to take the next concrete step of obedience, not to wait for a feeling. Name one command you have been hearing without doing, and do the smallest faithful next thing today.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gap between sincere hearing and actual obedience
- Fading resolve, divided heart, and mistaking feeling for change
- Being a doer, not a forgetful hearer (James 1:22-25)
- Obedience as the next concrete step, not a waited-for feeling

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you been hearing without doing?
- What usually feeds the gap in your own life?
- What is the smallest faithful step you can take today?

Question 9

Student Question:

These Ten Commandments belong to the covenant God made with Israel at Horeb. Which of them express abiding moral truth restated in the New Covenant, how does the Sabbath command differ, and what does the New Testament teach about the Old Law being fulfilled in Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here we must handle the text with care, because the Ten Commandments are often treated as a timeless code lifted out of their setting. The text itself locates them: “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb” (5:2). These ten words are the heart of the covenant God made with Israel through Moses. That is the starting point. They are not a free-floating moral law dropped from the sky; they are covenant stipulations given to a particular people whom God had redeemed from Egypt (5:6).

Now, nine of these ten words express moral truths that are abiding and unchanging, because they flow from the unchanging character of God and the nature He gave humanity. Having no other gods, refusing idolatry, revering God’s name, honoring parents, and the prohibitions of murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and coveting, all of these are restated and pressed upon Christians in the New Testament (for example Ephesians 6:1–3; 1 John 5:21; Matthew 5:21–30; Romans 13:9; Colossians 3:5). They are not binding on us because they appear at Horeb; they are binding because they are repeated and rooted in the New Covenant and in the character of God Himself. The moral truth abides even though the Old Covenant as a covenant has passed.

The Sabbath command is the exception, and this is where many sincere people stumble. The fourth command, to keep the seventh day holy, was given to Israel as a sign of the Horeb covenant, grounded here in their redemption from slavery (5:15) and elsewhere in creation (Exodus 20:11). It is the one of the ten that is never restated as binding on Christians. On the contrary, the New Testament explicitly tells us not to let anyone judge us regarding “a Sabbath”, because these were “a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16–17). The Old Law, including its handwriting of ordinances, was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). We must not bind Sabbath-keeping on Christians as law; to do so is to put ourselves back under a covenant Christ has fulfilled and taken away.

What about Christian worship and the first day of the week? The Lord’s Day, the first day, is the day on which the early church assembled to break bread and give, but the New Testament never calls it a Christian Sabbath, and never transfers Old Covenant Sabbath rules to it. The disciples came together “on the first day of the week... to break bread” (Acts 20:7), and Paul directed the saints to lay by in store “on the first day of the week” (1 Corinthians 16:2). We keep the Lord’s Day by the apostolic pattern, gathering to worship, remember Christ in the Supper, and give, not

by importing rules about kindling fires or carrying burdens. The first day is a day of joyful resurrection assembly, not a legal day of prohibition.

Stand back and see the whole. The Old Law given through Moses was good and holy for its time (Romans 7:12), but it was never meant to be permanent. It pointed forward, it exposed sin, and it has now been fulfilled in Christ, who said He came not to abolish but to fulfill (Matthew 5:17), and whose cross took away its curse (Galatians 3:13) and ended its authority over us as a law-covenant (Hebrews 8–10). So we read Deuteronomy 5 with gratitude, we honor the abiding moral truths it carries, we let it drive us to Christ, and we refuse both errors: the error of dismissing its moral weight, and the error of binding its covenant, Sabbath and all, on people for whom Jesus has become the better and final word.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Ten Commandments as the covenant given to Israel at Horeb
- Nine moral truths restated and binding under the New Covenant
- The Sabbath command not carried over to Christians as law (Colossians 2:16–17)
- The handwriting of ordinances nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14)
- The Lord's Day, the first day, by apostolic pattern (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2)
- The Lord's Day is not a Christian Sabbath under Old Covenant rules
- The Old Law fulfilled in Christ, not abolished but completed (Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 8–10)

Discussion Prompts

- Why are the nine binding on us, and on what basis are they binding?
- How does Colossians 2:16–17 settle the Sabbath question for Christians?
- What is the difference between a Christian Sabbath and the Lord's Day?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across Deuteronomy 5, name one specific way the living God who spoke on the mountain is forming you through this chapter, and what is your next obedient step?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Look back across the whole chapter. We have stood at a burning mountain, heard ten words that order a whole life, watched a people tremble and beg for a mediator, and traced the way the Old Law points beyond itself to Christ. The chapter ends with God's own longing: "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever" (5:29).

That is the heart of the matter. God was never after mere rule-keeping; He was after a heart that loves and fears Him so that life goes well. Under the New Covenant that very heart is

promised and given: God writes His law on our hearts (Hebrews 8:10) and pours His love into us by the Spirit (Romans 5:5). The terror at Sinai becomes nearness at Zion.

So name one specific thing the living God is doing in you through Deuteronomy 5. Perhaps He is dethroning an idol, restoring reverence for His name, healing your honor toward a parent, or curing a covetous heart. Whatever it is, He is forming Christ in you. Decide your next obedient step, and take it, not to earn His favor, which is already yours in Christ, but because you belong to Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's desire for a heart that loves and fears Him (5:29)
- The new heart promised under the New Covenant
- Christ forming us through the abiding truths of the chapter
- Obedience as response to grace, not a means of earning it

Discussion Prompts

- What is God's deepest desire for His people in 5:29?
- Which truth from this chapter is God forming in you?
- What is your one next obedient step, and when will you take it?