

Lesson 10: The Ten Commandments

Objective: The confirmands will learn:

- The relevance of the Ten Commandments today.
- Their actions should reflect behaviours that show their love towards God and a step towards living a Christ-centred life.

Contents: The Ten Commandments

1. Lead-In

Ask **To whom did God give the Ten Commandments and where?**
Answer God met Moses on Mount Sinai and gave him the commandments (Exodus 20).

Ask **Why did God give the people of Israel the Ten Commandments?**

Explain God gave them the commandments so that they could structure their relationship with Him and have a foundation for good relationships with other people.

2. The Commandments and their relevance today

Ask **Do the Commandments still have relevance to influence our behaviour today?**

Explain Each Commandment will be discussed to determine how it shapes our behaviour today.

The First Commandment

A student reads aloud **I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.**

Most relevant for our time is to understand that in keeping with the First Commandment it is not acceptable to make a god, as it were, of power, honour, money, or one's own person. This does not mean that there should be conflict between reaching earthly objectives and serving the Lord, but this commandment does remind us that we should make the worshipping of the Lord the primary focus of our lives.

It is also in violation of the First Commandment to create a conception of God that is defined by our own wishes or opinions, in other words, to expect God to be what we want Him to be. Further transgressions the First Commandment include Satanism, fortune-telling, magic and spiritualism.

In Christian tradition this Commandment is not seen as preventing the making of pictures, sculptures, photos, or films of God. In the New Apostolic Church, however, devotional images, icons, statues, and the like do not have any sort of religious function and they are not worshipped. They are not seen as having any spiritual powers or healing effects.

The Second Commandment

A student
reads aloud

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

Anyone who uses the name of God should do so in the awareness that he bears responsibility to God for this. Blasphemy is a serious abuse of the name of God. This happens when God is intentionally belittled, mocked, or criticized. Anyone who calls upon the Almighty while telling a lie is also taking the name of God in vain.

Transgressing the Second Commandment can, however, also be found in daily life. Any loose talk using the names “God”, “Jesus Christ”, or “Holy Spirit” is sinful. It is no different for curses in which God or Jesus is mentioned—even if only in altered form—and for jokes which feature God, the Father, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit. Such talk degrades God’s majesty and the holiness of His activity. As a Christian we avoid swearing in daily life.

When someone is called to take an oath in a court of law, such an oath is not seen as a sin. This happens when someone calls upon God as witness in the wording of an oath that states: “So help me God”. By so doing he is in fact declaring that he must be truthful to the Eternal One and in this way publicly professes his faith in the all-powerful, all-knowing God.

The Third Commandment

A student
reads aloud

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

The Third Commandment makes an appeal to us to set aside one day of the week to worship God, to remember His deeds of salvation with thanks and to spend some time considering His word.

Something that is important for us to understand is that the Sunday is not the Sabbath. The seventh day of the Jewish calendar is known as the Sabbath and this is held sacred by Jews. This is the day of the week that is known to us as Saturday.

Christians however hold the Sunday sacred. The reason for this is that, according to the testimony of the gospels, Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead on this day (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16: 2). Keeping the Sunday holy is therefore also a profession of Jesus Christ’s resurrection and a remembrance of Easter.

So how do we keep the Sunday holy? Above all, by worshipping God in a divine service, by believingly accepting His word, receiving forgiveness of sins in a repentant attitude, and worthily partaking of the sacrament of Holy Communion. By doing this, we remember Christ's sacrifice and act of redemption, celebrate His resurrection, and direct our eyes to His return.

As far as possible, the Sunday should be a day of rest and remembrance of the gospel. It is a special day for the soul in which divine values such as peace and fellowship should stand in the foreground. The commandment to keep the Sunday holy, calls upon believers to assess the degree to which their activities are consistent with the purpose of this day. Their main concern should be to deepen and preserve the effect of the divine service.

The Fourth Commandment

A student
reads aloud

Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

Regardless of their age, children have the task of honouring their parents.

If their relationship with one another is characterised by love and trust, parents can expect obedience of their children. Children are called upon to become aware of all the care their parents have shown them in the course of their childhood and youth. Esteem and respect should be seen in their dealings with their parents, as well as in their conversations with them.

Parents have the responsibility in raising their children to ensure—through their own God-pleasing conduct—that they do not make it difficult for their children to esteem them. They set an example to their children through the way in which they treat, speak with, and speak of their own parents and parents-in-law. It is good for a harmonious family life when parents and children treat one another with love and in this way build a relationship of trust.

Fulfilling the Fourth Commandment also means lovingly accepting one's parents even in high age.

If the Fourth Commandment is fulfilled, the blessing of God rests upon it. In the Old Testament, "long life" is an expression for God's blessing. In the new covenant this blessing reveals itself in spiritual gifts.

The Fifth Commandment

A student
reads aloud

You shall not murder.

Life is given by God. God alone is the Lord of life and death and therefore no human being is entitled to end a human life. Violence and

disregard for life in today's society must not in any way be a reason to qualify why this can be acceptable in terms of the commandment.

The commandment not to murder also incorporates the duty to protect and preserve human life.

Let us consider a few specific issues.

Death penalty

The New Apostolic Church does not recognise the death penalty as a suitable means of preventing murder and therefore does not regard it as a suitable means of community protection either.

Killing unborn life

Unborn life is to be respected and protected, since it is, from the moment of conception, a human life given by God. Thus the Church disapproves of abortion as well as the destruction of artificially generated human life.

Suicide

As we know, suicide is the taking of one's own life, but also falling under this topic is active assisted suicide, passive assisted suicide and euthanasia. Active assisted suicide and euthanasia is regarded as a violation of the Fifth Commandment.

Any decision regarding measures to prolong life is up to the patient himself. In the event there is no statement of will, this decision should be made solely in consultation with doctors and relatives after a responsible assessment of the patient's best interests. Neither of these cases is considered a violation of the Fifth Commandment.

The Sixth Commandment

A student
reads aloud

You shall not commit adultery.

Marriage is the lifelong union between a man and a woman as desired by God. It is based on an act of free will which is expressed in a public vow of fidelity (Matthew 19: 4–5).

In general terms, any married person who has sexual intercourse with someone other than his/her spouse, or any unmarried person who has sexual intercourse with a married person, commits adultery.

In the New Testament, divorce is assessed as sin. The only exception in which divorce was permissible was in the case of adultery committed by one's spouse. The Church is thus faced with the question of how to deal with divorced persons. Like any other sin, adultery and divorce require forgiveness. Separated and divorced persons are not excluded from receiving the sacraments. They have their place in the congregation and are cared for by their ministers in an unbiased fashion. Divorced persons who wish to remarry and who request a

wedding blessing will receive it. This is to provide them with an opportunity for a new start.

The Seventh Commandment

A student
reads aloud

You shall not steal.

It is forbidden to take that which belongs to another person. This is one of the basic principles of human legal systems and serves to protect and respect property. This comes from God.

Although theft occurs when material or intellectual property is taken from others, there are other forms of theft. For example, fraud can amount to theft according to the meaning of the Seventh Commandment.

This example extends the concept of theft to include usury, exploiting another person's misfortune, misappropriation, and embezzlement. Fraud, tax evasion, corruption, and squandering money entrusted to one's care also fall into this category. Thus the Seventh Commandment is an admonition not to touch or unrightfully diminish the property of one's neighbour, nor to rob him of his honour, reputation, or human dignity.

The Eighth Commandment

A student
reads aloud

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

All false witness is a lie. In a broader sense, the Eighth Commandment can be understood as ruling out any dishonest conduct (Leviticus 19:11). Due to the imperfection of human beings, no one will succeed in speaking nothing but the truth. However, the more diligently a person follows Christ, the more he will speak and act in a truthful manner. Apostle Paul advises: "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour'" (Ephesians 4: 25).

To speak truth with one's neighbour does not mean that everyone should always criticise his fellow man with unpleasant truths. Great care should be taken in speaking to—and about—others.

Our conduct in society and business should also be according to the Eighth Commandment. Besides giving false testimony in court and blatantly lying, white lies, half-truths, statements intended to conceal the true facts, and slander are violations of the Eighth Commandment. Likewise bragging and exaggeration, hypocrisy and spreading rumours, defamation, and flattery are expressions of untruthfulness.

The Ninth Commandment is

A student
reads aloud

You shall not covet your neighbour's house.

And the Tenth Commandment:

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's.

The last two of the Ten Commandments are closely linked to one another in terms of content. They assign man the task of watching over the purity of their hearts. This includes the endeavour to reject any temptation to commit sin. Covetousness can lead to avarice and stems mostly from envy. Covetousness drives the greedy to take possession of the property of others without any regard for them. The poor were often exploited by the greed of the powerful.

Christians are admonished to conduct themselves in accordance with their calling and to resist sinful desire "as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (1 Peter 1: 14–15). The Ninth and Tenth Commandments assign human beings the task of safeguarding the purity of their hearts.

The main points

I also want to allow the commandments of God to influence my behaviour.

Homework The confirmands write down the Ten Commandments on the page in their work books.