



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V24 N25

June 19, 2022

TEN WORDS “Words to Live By” Exodus 20:1-2

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Personal God

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

Psalm 121:1-2



Why are God's people to obey him?

A cursory reading of the book of Exodus leads to the unavoidable conclusion that the God of the Bible is a personal God. The book has a bifid structure, meaning it divides into two equal parts. One commentator explains: “Its first half (chaps. 1-19) tells the narrative of Israel’s miraculous rescue from slavery in Egypt and successful flight to Mount Sinai, all in fulfillment of God’s promise. Its second half introduces the Sinai Covenant (in 20:1-31:18), a formal, solemn expression of God’s relationship to his people and theirs to him, and then continues on to describe Israel’s rebellion against that covenant, subsequent renewal to it, and the fulfillment of its stipulations concerning the tabernacle (32:1-40:38). Thus the first half of Exodus is all about rescue from forced service to a pagan nation, and the second half is all about proper service for the one true God by keeping his covenant” (Douglas K. Stewart, *Exodus*, NAC, 438-39).

In the first half of the book God exhibits a key trait of personhood. He is “self-aware.” He exhibits awareness of what he is *feeling, thinking, and doing*. What’s more, he distinguishes himself from his people and exhibits a similar awareness with respect to them. Two of many *quotations* illustrate this – by the way, God also *speaks* to reveal himself to others, another trait of personhood. In 3:7-10 he says, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.” And in 6:2-5, he says, “I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself fully known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they resided as foreigners. Moreover, I have heard the

groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant” (see also 3:16-17; 4:21-23; 6:6-8; 7:1-5; 8:20-23; 10:1-2; 12:2-20; 13:2; 14:2-4, 15-18; 16:4-5, 11-12; 17:5-6).

In the second half of the book God exhibits another key trait of personhood. God enters into a *covenant*, that is, he makes a bilateral agreement with his people. Again two of many quotations illustrate this – by the way, in the context of covenant, God also gives commands, issues binding instructions, and makes promises. In 19:3-6, here is what he tells Moses to tell the Israelites: “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” And chapter 20 opens with these spoken words of God: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. . . .” The rest of the Ten Commandments follow.

Of course, the Law entailed more than the Ten Commandments. One commentator writes: “The Mosaic Law consisted of three classes of requirements: those governing *moral* life (the Ten Commandments), those governing *religious* life (the ceremonial ordinances), and those governing *civil* life (the civil statutes). The commandments expressed the righteous will of God (Exod. 20), the judgments governed Israel’s social life (Exod. 21:1 – 24:11), and the ordinances determined Israel’s religious life (Exod. 24:12 – 31:18). God gave the whole Law specifically for the nation of Israel (v. 3)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Exodus, 2022 ed., 179, plano-biblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/exodus.pdf). The Law *revealed* the holiness of God and *regulated* the life of his people. It “was given to a *redeemed* people, not to *redeem* a people” (J. Dwight Pentecost, “The Purpose of the Law,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 128:511 [July-September 1971], 233). It is linked to grace because it presumes God’s gracious act of saving his people, and therefore, obedience to it is not a condition of becoming God’s people. They had already become God’s people

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EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Exodus 20:1-2

1 And God spoke all these words:

2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

Cf. Deuteronomy 5:1-6

1 Moses summoned all Israel and said:

Hear, Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. 2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. 3 It was not with our ancestors that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. 4 The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. 5 (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

6 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "spoke" in v. 1.
- Underline "all these words" in v. 1.
- Bracket "I am the LORD your God" in v. 2.
- Box the repeated word "out" in v. 2.
- Underline "Egypt" and "land of slavery" in v. 2.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Locate where Moses and the people are when God speaks (see 19:16-25; 20:18-21; cf. Dt 5:2-5, 22-27).
 2. Comment on the significance of God *speaking directly* rather than through Moses (cf. Dt 5:23-27).
 3. To what do “all these words” refer?
 4. What do we learn from 34:28 regarding “all these words” not specified in 20:1-17?
 5. The *preamble/prologue* to the Mosaic Covenant (v. 2), identifies the parties to the agreement. Identify them.
 6. How does the *preamble/prologue* define the relationship between the two?
 7. What do you make of the repeated use of “out” in verse 2?
 8. The *preamble/prologue* establishes the *basis* for the covenant. How so?
 9. There are consequences for *compliance* and *noncompliance* with the stipulations of the covenant (see Dt 5:32-33; 6:13-19). Identify them.
 10. **Discussion:** The Mosaic Covenant was made with Israel. Talk about the relevance of the Ten Commandments to other nationalities at other times
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Commentary On The Text

God entered into a covenant relationship with the people he emancipated from Egypt. Arriving in Moab after years of wandering in the wilderness, Moses reminds the Israelites, “The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb” (Dt 5:2)—that covenant is known as the Mosaic Covenant. On the nature of the agreement the LORD made with the nascent nation of Israel, one commentator writes: “Comparative ancient Near Eastern studies have revealed that the covenant form and terminology that God used to communicate His agreement with Israel were common in Moses’ day. There were two basic types of formal covenants in the ancient Near East: *parity* (between equals) and *suzerainty* (between a sovereign and his subjects). The Mosaic Covenant was a suzerainty treaty. Such agreements characteristically contained a preamble (v. 3), historical prologue (v. 4), statement of general principles (v. 5a), consequences of obedience (vv. 5b-6a), and consequences of disobedience (omitted here)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Exodus,” 2022 ed., 178, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/exodus.pdf).

Suzerainty treaties are by definition *conditional*, that is, the benefits of the covenant are received only by complying with the stipulations of the agreement. In fact, noncompliance typically brings with it sanctions also specified in the agreement. Although not found in Exodus, a long list of blessings for obedience to the covenant and curses for disobedience to it is found in Deuteronomy 28.

The Mosaic Covenant included more than the Ten Commandments, aka the Decalogue, called *apodictic laws*, which are commands with the force of positive or negative categorical imperatives—i.e., “You shall” and “You shall not”—in contrast to *casuistic laws*, which are commands that depend on qualifying circumstances. It also included the Book of the Covenant with civil and religious ordinances (20:22-24:11), and ceremonial regulations (24:12-31:18). What’s more, it included more than just *ten* commandments. The same commentator above writes: “It is very important to recognize how comprehensive the Mosaic Law was, and not limit it to the Ten Commandments. The rabbis, following Maimonides, counted 613 commands, 248 positive and 365 negative, in the law” (Constable, 179).

While there can be no doubt that Exodus 20:1-17 contains 10 commandments (cf. 34:28), their arrangement to make the traditional ten varies. “In the Hebrew Bible, as well as in Eastern Orthodoxy and in a wide Christian tradition, the *first* commandment is ‘I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me,’ and the *second* is ‘you shall not make for yourself an image. . . .’ But Roman Catholics and Lutherans run

these two commands together into a single commandment and divide the commands not to covet your neighbor’s wife and not to covet your neighbor’s house into commands nine and ten respectively. According to the latter construction, the first commandment condemns false worship, and the tenth commandment distinguishes wife from property. Separating the first two commandments distinguishes between worshiping either Canaanite or foreign deities, who were thought of as powers that rule aspects of nature, and misrepresenting the character of true deity. According to this second command, God cannot be compared to anything that exists. These are distinct notions, whereas the command not to desire your neighbor’s property, whether wife or other aspects of a person’s household, contradicts the law of love for one’s neighbor. We therefore follow the Hebrew and Reformed traditions” (Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 411). The fact that verse 2 serves as a preamble/prologue and is not an imperative suggests the traditional division of the ten reflected in the NIV.

Exodus 20:1-2 serves as the preamble/prologue to the Mosaic Covenant. As such it identifies the giver and the recipients of the covenant—in this case, the LORD and the Israelites or in suzerainty treaty terms the Yahweh, the Great King, and his subjects. What’s more, it describes the relationship between the two parties. Yahweh is their God who redeemed them from bondage in Egypt. The repetition of “out” in connection with “Egypt” and “the land of slavery” points to the marvelous grace bestowed on them by him. “Yahweh, who is speaking to them, has given himself to them. He has brought them out from Egypt. He has made them who were no people a people; he has given freedom to those who were slaves. What follows is what the relationship must have from the people of Israel” (John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 3, *Exodus*, 284). Israel owes Yahweh, their God, a debt of gratitude that demands obedience from them. Hence, the preamble/prologue is the basis for the commandments that follow.

Although the Ten Commandments were given to nascent Israel, they have a universal significance, because they express the very nature of God. They are as Paul says, “holy, righteous, and good” (Ro 7:12) in that they express what is holy, righteous, and good. And although Christians are not parties to the Mosaic Covenant, are not under the law, and although obedience to them is not a means of obtaining salvation, the Ten Commandments remain significant to all people in that they reveal what is fundamentally right and wrong.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *spoke* "Only the Ten Commandments are given directly by God; the rest of the Law is mediated to them through Moses" (Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 413). "In Hebrew, *words* is deliberately connected with the verb *spoke* with which the verse begins. The whole stress is that these commandments are words of revelation from God. The emphasis is primarily on their source, secondarily on their purpose, and only thirdly on their content, although this is naturally governed by God's nature. It has been well said that the commandments are God's nature expressed in terms of moral imperatives" (R. Alan Cole, *Exodus*, TOTC, 151-52).

v. 1 *all these words* Cf. 34:28 where "the ten words" in Hebrew is traditionally translated "the ten commandments" (ESV, NASB, NET, NIV, NLT, et al.). "*words*. A technical term for '(covenant) stipulations' in the ancient Near East (e.g., among the Hittites; see also 24:3,8; 34:28)" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ex 20:1). "The legal portion of Exodus is patterned after those of ancient covenants known as 'suzerainty treaties,' where a conqueror made a treaty with the conquered in which he 'benefited' them with his protection and case as long as they would abide by the treaty stipulations. Such covenants normally have six parts, summarized here with the coordinates that relate the structure to Exodus:

1. Preamble: which identifies the giver and recipients of the covenant ('the LORD your God,' 20:2)
2. Prologue: a reminder of the relationship of the suzerain to the people ('who brought you out of Egypt,' 20:2)
3. Stipulations: various laws/obligations on the part of the people (20:3-23:19; 25:1-31:18)
4. List of witnesses to the covenant ['I am Yahweh,' Exod 29:46; 31:13; Lev 11:44]
5. Document clause: providing for writing down of the covenant so that periodic reading and relearning of the covenant can take place as time goes by (see Exod 24:4,7,12)
6. Sanctions: blessings and curses as incentives for obedience (see Exod 20:5-6,12,14; 23:20-31; cf. Lev 26:3-14 [blessings]; 26:14-39 [curses]; 26:40-45 [restoration blessings])" (Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC, 439; see also Waltke, 409-11). "The 'great king' stated his identity, outlined what he had done for his prospective vassal, promised future protection and, on the grounds and basis of this, demanded exclusive loyalty and laid down certain obligations for his subjects. Often lists of curses and blessings are appended: these too are familiar from the Old Testament. This is not of course to say that Israel's law is deliberately imitating Hittite suzerainty

but that both are faithfully reproducing the common literary and structural patterns of the time, just as Paul's epistles show formal and outward similarity in structure to the secular letters of the day" (Cole, 153).

v. 2 *I am the LORD . . .* Cf. 3:14-17; 6:2-8.

"The revelation of Yahweh here begins with the personal pronoun. 'I' — a person, a living personality, not an object or a mere thought. This enabled him to address 'you' — Israel, and all his people, making the binding stipulations for them to conform to his will (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 544)" (*The NET Bible*, 3sn on Ex 20:2). "Whatever the literary form of this sentence, whether it be statement or command, it is the credal basis of all Israel's later faith. It embraces the great divine Self-disclosure contained in the new name YHWH, which affirms the personality of God in direct terms: it also shows Him as living, dynamic and active in Israel's history. The succeeding verses will go on to show that His nature can be understood by man only in moral terms. So we have the summary of Israel's faith: *a God who speaks and a God who acts*" (Cole, 152, italics added).

v. 2 *out* See on "Prologue," the second part of the six-part suzerainty treaty. "The prologue, the part of a covenant that explains how the parties came to be related, is indicated in the second clause of the verse ('who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery'). By reason of having rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, Yahweh had a claim on his chosen people" (Stuart, 446-47).

v. 2 *Egypt, land of slavery* By the repetition of "out," the relative clause in verse 2 emphasizes a two-fold fact. Yahweh is a redeemer; they are emancipated slaves — "a people brought forth from Egypt, and from the non-status of slaves to the status of a people to whom Yahweh has given himself" (John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 3, *Exodus*, 284).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Obedience is the debt of gratitude owed God by his people
for redeeming them from sin and death.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

I recently went to a local school and along with several pastors, served on a panel that tried to answer deep theological questions posed by the 5th grade class. One of the questions on my rotation was, "How do you get God to talk to you audibly?" Boy, wouldn't that be amazing! On several occasions, I've heard God's gentle whisper plant a seed of thought in my head, and I fully believe he was speaking directly to me. But I haven't had the luxury of an audible voice telling me where to go and what to do. Can you imagine what it was like for the Israelites? The thunder boomed, the lightning cracked, a trumpet blasted very loudly, and then God addressed them personally. Something big was happening. Something unlike anything the Israelites had yet to experience. Before now, God had always used Moses as His mediary, but in this case, the Israelites heard the audible word of the Most Holy God. God spoke to the Israelites, called Himself by name (whoa!), and reminded them of His infinite goodness. Though it might not be the same as it was for the Israelites, God clearly speaks to us today. Step outside and look at His beautiful creation. He painted that sunset so you'll know His majesty. Call a mentor or friend from biblical community and He'll remind you of His mighty works. Boldly ask, seek, and knock through prayer; He'll "speak" His answer in His own time. The most important way He speaks to us today is through His Word, where He reveals Himself, guides our way and mirrors our character to His Son's.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Exodus 20:1-2.

1. Who spoke the words in our passage?
2. Who did God say He is?
3. What did God do? For whom?

What Do You Think?

And is a connecting word. What happened before God spoke (look at Exodus 19)? What would it have been like for the Israelites to hear God speak?

What Do You Do?

If you want to hear God's voice, read His Word out loud. Every day this week while the family is gathered at the table read Psalm 1 out loud.

CORE COMPETENCY: Personal God

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Colossians 3:12

"Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week's verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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