



The Big Ten

Exodus 20:1-20

Welcome to 'Together Apart', free intergenerational resources to help us be church together while we are apart.

All the sections explore the same Bible passage in a range of creative ways. Choose whichever parts work best for you, and remember that 'All Age' does not mean 'only for the kiddies'!

You can find lots more free resources like this at www.reflectionary.org

Here is what you can find in each section:



A Word in Your Ear

A section from the Bible passage that we can all learn from together, whatever our age. With space for notes or art around the edges



Food for Thought

Aimed at adults and teens, some thoughts and questions on the passage. Occasionally there might even be some Greek or Hebrew!



Inner Space

A journaling space for you to record what's in your head, whether that is worries, dreams or a shopping list.



Looking Closer

A creative and interactive look at the Bible passage. Great for older children and anyone who likes an immersive approach.



I Wonder...

An imaginative style of Bible study based on Lectio Divina and Godly Play wondering.



Take a Break

A chill-out zone, with meditative colouring for adults and children, and links to audio recordings of the passages.



Creation Station

A craft for children (or young-at-heart adults!) to help us think about the passage. Glue sticks at the ready!



High 5

Some creative prayer ideas for helping us to spend time with God. Five minutes, or as long as you want.



The Full Text

Just like it says on the tin.



A Word in Your Ear

Take your time reading this extract from our Bible passage. Ask God to help you hear. You can decorate the space around the words if you like.

The Big Ten

God spoke all these words:

No other gods, only me.

No carved gods of any size, shape, or form.

No using the name of God, your God,
in curses or silly banter.

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Honour your father and mother.

No murder.

No adultery.

No stealing.

No lies about your neighbour.

Don't set your heart on anything that is
your neighbour's.

The Message



Food for Thought

The Ten Commandments? Yawn. Either they're boring, irrelevant and out-dated, or we've studied them a hundred times before – what more could we possibly learn from this well-worn passage?

How about a new tack? We could think about the things that *didn't* make it into the top ten, but perhaps might have. For example, what's the first and greatest command? *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength*. That's what Jesus said, and it's in the Shema, the important prayer of Judaism, but it's from Deut 6:5, not one of The Big Ten.

That's kinda surprising when you think about it. None of The Big Ten tells us to love God!

Q: Why do you think that might be? What else do you notice when you read the Ten Commandments carefully? What else might you expect to find that is missing?

It's also important to think about the context of The Big Ten. Moses is speaking to the people of God *after* the exodus from Egypt but *before* the Promised Land. They've had the manna and quail. They've had the water from the rock. They've been out of Egypt for three months and have spent pretty much the whole time complaining and arguing.

That brings us to chapter 19 and to Mount Sinai. Moses goes up and God tells him that this rag-tag bunch of squabbling misfits is to be, out of all the nations, God's treasured possession. "Although the whole earth is mine", says God, "you people will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." No pressure! And then come The Big Ten.

Q: In the light of this context, what do you think was the primary purpose of the ten commandments spoken by God in chapter 20, (and the several hundred more in the following chapters)? How does this apply to us, today?

While Moses is on the mountain, God describes hundreds of other laws beside The Big Ten and lots of details about the tabernacle, and then gives Moses the "covenant law, the two tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God" (Ex 31:18). Apart from being a rather impressive party trick, writing things on stone was as significant then as it is now. Common writing materials of the time were parchment (animal skins), papyrus and clay, but writing something on stone meant it was important and it was for keeps.

In art, the tablets are usually shown with five commandments on one and five on the other, but it probably wasn't like that. When countries in the ancient Near East made a treaty, they would engrave the conditions and promises on a matching pair of rectangular stone tablets, one copy for each party. The tablets would then be kept in their respective temples, with their gods being called as witnesses to the covenant. (compare Gen 31:53)

Israel's copy was kept in the Ark because God was the witness, and God's copy was kept there too because, well, he probably doesn't have pockets.

Q: What does it mean to have God as the witness to our treaty with him? What are the terms of your covenant with God?

Ref: 'What was Written on the Two Tablets?' <https://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Parasha/eng/kitisa/mar.html>



Inner Space

What's going round your head? Here is a space for you to put your thoughts on paper. You can write, draw ... whatever you like. What will you put here?

A large, empty, rounded rectangular frame with a double-line border, intended for writing or drawing.



Looking Closer

This is one of the most famous bits of the Bible, but it's often not the most popular. Is this God being a grumpy killjoy? "Don't do this!" and "Don't do that!" Let's take a look.

God gave his people lots of rules about how to live, but these are The Big Ten. The first four are to do with how we relate to God. God's people had been living in Egypt for the last few hundred years, and they'd seen how Egyptian people worshipped their many gods. Was the Lord their God like that?

Q: How does God want us to relate to him? What four rules would you write if you were God?

After they left Egypt, God's people had to work out how to live together in their new country. But they had no laws or government and it was all a bit of a mess.

In the chapter just before, it tells how Moses was getting snowed under with all the complaints people had: "*He borrowed my donkey and gave it back lame!*" "*She broke my cooking pot!*" "*No, I didn't!*" "*Yes, you did!*" ARGHH! So the last six rules are about how we relate to others

Q: If you were God, what six rules would you write for people to live together well?

Someone asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment. Jesus replied, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*" The second is this: '*Love your neighbour as yourself.*' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:20-31)

Q: Neither of these is in The Big Ten. Why did Jesus give these two as his answer?



I Wonder...

Read or listen to the passage a few times and let it sit in your mind.

Which words, phrases or ideas do you notice? Does anything stand out for you? Hold that in your heart and listen to what God might be saying.

I wonder where you see yourself in this story.

I wonder which part you like the least.

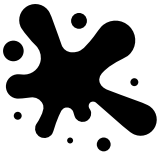


Take a Break

Put on some music, or listen to the passage being read out while you simply sit and be. You can colour the picture below, or fill it with zentangles, or you can just spend the time breathing.

Exodus 20 on Bible Gateway audio [ESV](#) – [Message](#) – [NIV \(Dramatised\)](#) – [NIV \(Suchet\)](#)





Creation Station – Big Ten Cards!

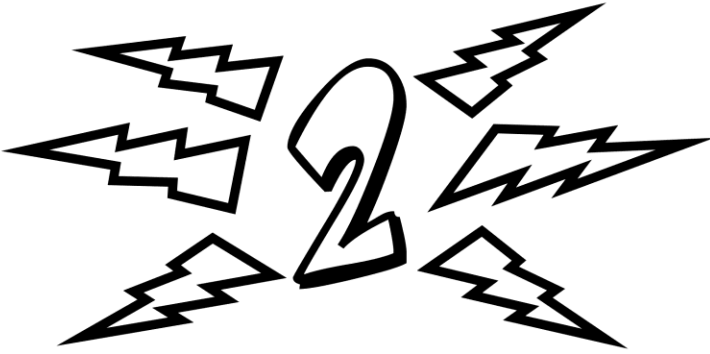
Challenge yourself (and any handy grown-ups) to some games with this fun set of cards to make. Perhaps you can make up your own games, too!

You will need:

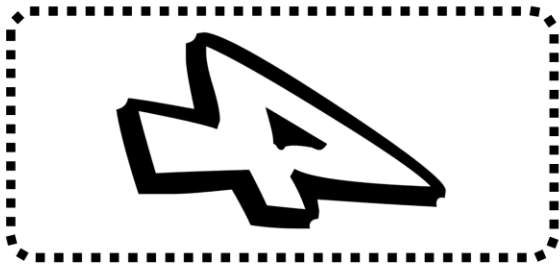
- Templates for front and back of cards (see the next pages)
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Coloured pens
- (optional) small objects to represent The Big Ten

What to Do:

1. Print out the front and back of the cards, either double-sided on card, or on separate sheets of paper. If you prefer, you can print out the blank template and make your own designs or write the commandments in the form that you know them.
2. If you used paper, stick the sheets back to back, making sure that the solid lines match up. Cut along the solid lines to make ten double-sided cards, and colour them in.
3. Optional: Look around the house and find a small object for each of The Big Ten. Eg:
 1. **Never have other gods** – a big number 1, such as a birthday candle
 2. **Never put things in God's place** – a coaster, the place for a mug
 3. **Never use God's name carelessly** – a toothbrush to keep our mouths clean
 4. **Keep God's holy day of rest** – a torch or something else that can switch off
 5. **Honour your mum and dad** – a sticking plaster, because parents look after you
 6. **Never murder** – a 'blade' of grass
 7. **Respect marriage** – a ring or something heart-shaped
 8. **Never steal** – a teaspoon or something else made of *steel* (get it?)
 9. **Never lie** – a box of matches, because lying is like starting a wildfire
 10. **Don't be envious of people's stuff** – something valuable, such as a phone or coins
4. Now for the games! You can make up your own games or use the suggestions here:
 - Have the cards writing side up. Can you put them in order? Who can do it fastest?
 - Have the cards number side up. Can you say what's on the other side? Take it in turns to pick one, and keep the ones you get right.
 - Have the cards number side up. Can you place the ten objects to match the commandment on the other side?
 - Have the cards writing side up, then secretly remove one. Can you spot what's missing? Harder: do this with the cards number side up! Try this with the objects, too.
 - Place the ten objects around the room, or the cards writing side up. Call out a number (1 to 10) and see who grabs the right object or card first.
 - Bingo! Everyone has their own set, writing side up. The leader calls out random numbers (or use a pair of dice) and you see if you can turn over the right commandment. If the number is wrong, you miss that go.



1 ONE



three

SIX!

Five

eight



NINE

Never have
any other gods

Never put things
in God's place

Never use God's
name carelessly

Keep God's
holy day of rest

Honour your
mum and dad

Never murder

Respect
marriage

Never steal

Never lie

Don't be envious
of people's stuff



The Full Text

Exodus 20:1-20

1 Then God spoke all these words:

2 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; 3 you shall have no other gods before me.

4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, 6 but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7 You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

8 Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. 9 For six days you shall labour and do all your work. 10 But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

12 Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

13 You shall not murder.

14 You shall not commit adultery.

15 You shall not steal.

16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

17 You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

18 When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, 19 and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die.' 20 Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin.'

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