



'Worship at home' Sunday October 8th 2023

We come to worship God,
who we find in the holy spaces
and the ordinary places of our lives,
sometimes in unexpected ways.

As you prepare yourself for worship,
you might bring with you some **rules of a board game**
or an **instruction sheet** from an electronic device.



Psalm 19: selected verses

*The instructions of the LORD
are perfect, reviving the soul.
The decrees of the LORD are
trustworthy, making wise the
simple. The commandments
of the LORD are right,
bringing joy to the heart. The
commands of the LORD are
clear, giving insight for living.*

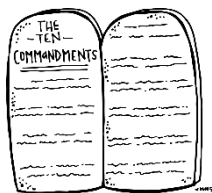
*Reverence for the LORD is
pure, lasting forever. The
laws of the LORD are true;
each one is fair. May the
words of my mouth and the
meditation of my heart be
pleasing to you, O LORD, my
rock and my redeemer.*

New Living Translation

Recall some of the rules in your household, perhaps as you were growing up. How strict were they?

Study the instructions in front of you. How much detail do they give? If you knew nothing about the game or device, would they help you to understand it?

Reflect on why we have rules. Imagine the chaos if we each did our own thing in a game, or on the road. Rules teach and remind us how to get along with each other, and keep us safe.



One of the foundational stories of our faith is of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

How many of the Ten Commandments can you remember? You might like to write them down in your own words.

Exodus 20: selected verses

Then God gave the people all these instructions: "I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. "You must not have any other god but me. "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. "You must not misuse the name of the LORD your God. "Remember to observe the Sabbath day

by keeping it holy. "Honour your father and mother. "You must not murder. "You must not commit adultery. "You must not steal. "You must not testify falsely against your neighbour. "You must not covet your neighbour's house. You must not covet your neighbour's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbour."

New Living Translation

"A hypocritical businessman, whose fortune had been the misfortune of many others, told Mark Twain piously, "Before I die, I intend to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

I want to climb to the top of Mount Sinai and read the Ten Commandments aloud."

"I have a better idea," suggested Twain.

"Why don't you stay right at home in Boston and keep them?"

— Mark Twain, The Wit and Wisdom of Mark Twain

Prayer of Confession:

Gracious God, forgive us:

- the times we have not followed your ways of love;
- the times we fail to put you first, bowing instead to our money, our possessions, and the expectations of other people;
- the times we create idols for ourselves, only to discover their shallowness and emptiness;
- the times we dishonour your name, or are careless with our words;



- the times we place our work above all else, busying ourselves rather than giving time to you, ourselves, our family and friends;
- the times we go our own way, disregarding others or disregarding you;
- the times we are not careful with your creation, doing harm by our thoughtlessness or ignorance;
- the times we are not loyal and loving in our relationships;
- the times we might be tempted to take what is not rightfully ours;
- the times we lie, or gossip, or falsely accuse, in order to save our own reputation;
- the times we are not content with what we have, wanting more.

For all these times, loving God, we are sorry. Help us to follow your way of love. Amen.

We are assured of God’s forgiveness: God made a covenant with Moses, to be faithful and loving. That covenant was fulfilled in Christ, in whom we find forgiveness and grace.

Our sins are forgiven. *Thanks be to God!*

**When have you found rules useful?
When have you experienced rules
as restrictive, or irrelevant?**



When we are children, we are expected to do as we are told, because we trust adults to know what is best for us. As we grow up, we might question the rules and assumptions we have learned, or at least stretch the boundaries! As adults, we might come to a state where we do the right thing out of a sense of personal integrity and social responsibility. We follow rules not only because we have to, but because we want to, and we realise it is (usually) for a greater social good.

God’s *Torah* (law, instruction) formed the basis for Jewish living, guiding how the people related to God and to each other. The Ten Commandments, given in covenant with Moses, reminded the ancient Israelites that they were God’s people, and God

would be faithful. The rules were to help the people live in good relationship with each other, and with God, in love.

Sometimes rules become rigid and unbending, and the original purpose is forgotten. Rules that are designed to nourish us and protect our freedom can become limiting and restrictive. Hundreds of years later, Jesus challenged the legalism of the Pharisees and the focus they had placed on the law, healing on the Sabbath and eating with outcasts.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them,”

Matthew 5:17

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:37-40

The Ten Commandments are not simply words engraved on stone for an ancient people thousands of years ago, to be followed blindly. They are rules of love, which embody how we are called to live, and very powerfully shape our relationships with God and with each other. They challenge us to put God and others first. It is this self-giving, transformative love which can change our lives, and our relationships with those around us. Following God’s rules of love help us grow in wisdom, righteousness and truth.

Reflect on Jesus’ teaching to love God and to love others. How is this shown in your life? In your church community?



Pray for others: Think of the various relationships you have with people, in many different contexts. How might loving God, and loving them, be your priority? Pray for each of these people and situations.

Closing: Throughout this week, may you know the transforming love of God, the compassion of Christ, and be empowered by the Holy Spirit to love your neighbour in all you do. Amen 4