

# WEEK 12: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION



In this final study we will step back to consider the Decalogue as a whole and its important role in the life of the Christian. There will also be opportunity to review some of your most important reflections from the various *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings* encountered through this study of each of the Ten Commandments.

## The Big Picture of the Decalogue

God delivered the Israelites from Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai. Upon their arrival, God explained the purpose of the commandments he would give them there: “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:4–6).

The commandments were the terms of a covenant, a new relationship founded in grace. God had delivered the people from bondage, bearing them to himself “on eagles’ wings.” Now he would adopt this people as his treasured ones. The ways of Egypt were all the Israelites knew, but the ways of Canaan would soon be their new context. In contrast, God wanted to renew his people in the culture of heaven. The expressions “kingdom of priests” and “holy nation” mean that Israel was to be an outpost of heaven in the world—a society of priests and holy persons dwelling in God’s presence among mankind.

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What does a society of heaven look like in this world? The Decalogue, given by God in his own voice, was the summary blueprint of that heavenly culture. And we find that it describes a culture of love.

The first words of the Decalogue are “I am the LORD your God.” The last word at the end of the Decalogue is “neighbor.” Those statements are literally and figuratively the two poles of the collection. Five commandments at the beginning teach us to love “the LORD your God”: (1) have no other gods; (2) make no idols; (3) do not take God’s name in vain; (4) remember/observe the Sabbath; (5) honor father and mother. The fifth (“honor your father and your mother”) serves a dual function, both ending the first table and introducing the second. It is followed by five more commands concerning how to “love your neighbor”: (6) do not murder; (7) do not commit adultery; (8) do not steal; (9) do not bear false witness; (10) do not covet. That last commandment points out the sinful attitude behind violations of all the other commandments. These Ten Commandments are a summary of the whole law, which can be further summed up in the single word *love* (Gal. 5:14).

When Jesus declared that the sum of the law is to love (Matt. 22:37–40), he was not inventing a new way of interpreting the law; he was restoring its proper message. God wanted his people to leave Egypt behind, to remain aloof from Canaan’s ways, and to become a society of heaven’s love on earth.

Sadly, Israel failed to foster the community of godliness promised in the law. The Old Testament narratives recount Israel’s successes and failures in this calling, ending ultimately in exile and the loss of its king. But God promised to provide a new king one day, a perfect son of David who would bring about the promised kingdom of grace, goodness, and love. That promised king came, and he was Jesus.

Jesus embodied the culture of heaven in human flesh, showing us what it looks like to love perfectly (John 1:14–18). He also fulfilled the atonement foreshadowed in the law, giving his life as a sacrifice for his people’s forgiveness (John 1:29). Today, for those who are in Christ, there is forgiveness of sins. And in Christ we have a perfect example of the love described by the law.

Therefore, when we study the Decalogue, we are actually studying the character of Jesus. And as we apply the Decalogue’s lessons on loving God and loving our neighbors, the Holy Spirit conforms us more and more to Christ’s likeness. For this reason the Ten Commandments are a cornerstone of Christian discipleship. Every major catechism of the church includes reflection on each of the Ten Commandments, and in this study we have participated in this great tradition of spiritual formation.

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**As you reflect on key lessons from this study for your own faith, read through the following three sections on *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and**

**Theological Soundings.** Respond to the prompts provided as you consider each. Then engage in the final *Personal Implications* section.

**Gospel Glimpses**

The law was never able to save anyone. But “the Law and the Prophets bear witness” to the salvation God was to provide through Jesus (Rom. 3:21–22). It would be foolish to look to the Decalogue for rules to make ourselves holy. But it would also be foolish to ignore the Decalogue’s lessons on the goodness of Jesus who transforms us, by the Spirit’s power, into his likeness. The Ten Commandments play a valuable role in the ministry of the gospel, and they teach us the holiness of Jesus.

Review the *Gospel Glimpses* in each section of this study. First, review each of the glimpses at Jesus and how he fulfills each commandment. What are two or three lessons you have learned about the righteousness and love of Jesus through this study of his character in the Decalogue?

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From the other *Gospel Glimpses* provided in this study, and considering your own insights into the gospel, what is one profound truth about God’s grace you learned from the Decalogue that stirs your heart to praise him?

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**Whole Bible Connections**

Israel’s law, called the Torah and contained in the Pentateuch, forms the foundation of the entire Bible. The Old Testament prophets, Jesus, and the New Testament apostles stand upon the promises first introduced in the Torah. As the summary of the law, the Decalogue succinctly captures many key truths of

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the Torah echoed throughout the Bible. The principles taught in the Decalogue help us to understand key themes throughout the rest of Scripture.

As you review the *Whole-Bible Connections* from throughout the study, identify two or three themes that you find especially helpful for your “big-picture” understanding of the Bible.

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Major sections of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount offer his exposition of various commandments in the Decalogue. Review Matthew 5:17–48. In this section of his sermon Jesus announces his purpose to fulfill the law. He then teaches several commandments of the Decalogue and other related laws for the instruction of his disciples. Which of the Ten Commandments does Jesus cite? List them below, along with any observations in light of this study.

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In his epistle to the Romans Paul explains the true purpose of the law. The law teaches us the righteousness of the kingdom that God promised to provide through the Messiah. The law was not a “do it yourself” plan to accomplish that righteous community ourselves. But by reading the law through the lens of faith in Christ, “we uphold the law” (Rom. 3:31) according to its original intention. Read Paul’s argument in Romans 3:21–31 and discuss the implications of Paul’s words for our use of the Decalogue as Christians.

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## Theological Soundings

The Decalogue provides important insights into the nature of God and his ways—that is, “theology.” One does not generally think of commandments as a source for theology. But as simple statements of God’s character, laws are an important component for any study of God’s nature. And, as the premier summary of the law, the Decalogue is especially important for our understanding of God.

Review the *Theological Soundings* from throughout this study. List several doctrinal insights that were new to you or that challenged your understanding of God.

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Love is the sum of the whole law. Indeed, love for God and love for neighbor are the great lessons of the two halves of the Decalogue. What have you learned about the nature of love through this study of the Ten Commandments?

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Both the Exodus Decalogue and its retelling in Deuteronomy end with a description of the people’s fear (Ex. 20:18–21; Deut. 5:22–33). To encounter the culture of heaven is overwhelming for sinful people. We need a mediator to intercede between us and God and to lead us in learning God’s ways. Moses served in that role for the people as they journeyed to the Promised Land (Ex. 20:21; Deut. 5:28–31). But even Moses knew the people needed a greater Mediator than himself (Deut. 18:18). Jesus is the perfect Mediator, the one who atones for us according to the law and sanctifies us into the community of love foreshadowed in that same law (Heb. 3:1–6). Write a short prayer asking Jesus,

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as your covenant Mediator, to lead you into the fruits of righteousness and love that we have learned in this study of the Decalogue.

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**Personal Implications**

God’s law convicts us of our sins, shows us the beauty of Christ in his righteousness, and guides us in our sanctification. As we conclude this study of the Decalogue, jot down some final lines of application for yourself individually and for the church in this generation.

First, how do the Ten Commandments convict you at this point in your spiritual growth? What aspects of the Decalogue seem especially convicting for the church as a whole in this generation?

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Second, what facet of Jesus’ beauty revealed in the Decalogue draws you to love him more right now? What aspect of his glory as shown in these commandments does the church as a whole need to rediscover?

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Finally, how will you ensure that the Decalogue remains a curriculum of spiritual growth in your life, lest you close this study and quickly forget what the Spirit has taught you here (James 1:25)?

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### As You Finish Studying the Decalogue . . .

We rejoice with you as you finish studying the Decalogue! May this study become part of your Christian walk of faith, day by day and week by week throughout all your life. Now we would greatly encourage you to study the Word of God on a week-by-week basis. To continue your study of the Bible, we would encourage you to consider other books in the *Knowing the Bible* series, and to visit [www.knowingthebibleseries.org](http://www.knowingthebibleseries.org).

Be encouraged to review this study from time to time. Revisit the notes that you have written and the things that you have highlighted or underlined. Reflect again on the key themes that the Lord has been teaching you about himself and about his Word. May these things become a treasure for you throughout your life—which we pray will be true for you, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.