



# God Gives the Ten Commandments

*Exodus 20:1–17*



## LESSON GOAL

Students will learn God's standard of perfection.

## BIBLE TRUTHS

- God is holy.
- God gave His people laws called the Ten Commandments.
- The Ten Commandments help God's people to be set apart from sin and to live holy lives.

## KEY VERSE

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine"  
(Exodus 19:5).

## APPLICATION

- Apply God's holy standards, the Ten Commandments, to your life.
- Discover God's holiness by observing His Law.

## NEXT WEEK

God Ordains the Tabernacle  
Read Exodus 25–31.

### Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group



## PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

*“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).*

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

### Bible Background

The Lord had given Israel a precious promise: if they listened and obeyed, they would become God’s special people, “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). With the prospect of such a privilege before them, the people quickly promised to obey all that the Lord had spoken. On the third day of consecration, the Lord revealed Himself with thunder, lightning, fire from heaven, the ground shaking, and loud trumpets (19:16–19). The people were forbidden to touch even the base of the mountain. God instituted a death penalty to keep the people away from His holy presence. Having warned the people yet again to not come up the mountain (19:21–22), God Himself then spoke to the people. He gave them His commandments to show them His holiness, to preserve the nation of Israel, and to reveal their sin. After the commandments were given, the people promised to obey and ratified their covenant with God.

### The Giving of the Ten Commandments and Ratification of the Covenant

While Moses was at the base of Mount Sinai, God spoke to the people “face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire” (Deut. 5:4). Later in Exodus, the special name of the “Ten Commandments” (Ex. 34:28) is used to refer to the commandments that God spoke to the people. Seeing the powerful display of God’s holiness was frightening enough for the people; hearing His voice was too much. The people begged Moses to be the mediator between them and God so that they would no longer hear God’s voice. God was pleased with their fear and their request (Deut. 5:25–31). Moses entered the cloud alone.

The Ten Commandments were not the whole covenant God made with the Israelites that day. Exodus 19:24–23:32, which God spoke to Moses, expanded on the basic principles given in the Ten Commandments and applied them to various situations among the Israelites. These additional laws, also called the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 24:7), fleshed out the Ten Commandments for Israel. When Moses came down from the mountain, he told the people all the words of the Lord. The people responded by saying that they would obey. Moses then wrote down all that God had commanded. (The Ten Commandments were not at this time written by God on the stone tablets. It was not until Moses went up the mountain again, this time for 40 days, that he received the Ten Commandments written on stone by God (34:28).)

The next morning, the covenant between God and Israel was ratified (Ex. 24:1–8). Moses built an altar at the foot of the mountain. Half of the blood from sacrifices was poured onto the altar, and the other half of the blood was poured into bowls (24:6). Moses again read to the people the Book of the Covenant. The people promised to do all that the Lord had spoken. Moses then sprinkled the people with blood (or perhaps sprinkled the 12 pillars he had built to represent the people). The blood on the altar and the people demonstrated that God and the people had

### Additional Reference Materials

*Moses and the Gods of  
Egypt: Studies in Exodus*  
by John J. Davis

*The MacArthur Study  
Bible* by John MacArthur

entered into a covenant. Israel had entered into a covenant relationship with God. The ratification of the covenant was celebrated as Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (two of Aaron's sons), and 70 of the elders of Israel "saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank" (Ex. 24:9–11). God had faithfully kept His promise. He had graciously made Israel His people and given them promises to bring them into the Promised Land, to protect them from poverty and sickness, and to drive out the nations in the land (Ex. 23:20–33). At the heart of Israel's responsibility to God were the Ten Commandments.

### **The Content of the Ten Commandments**

The Ten Commandments were preceded by a declaration of the character of God. The Lord proclaimed, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:2). First, God reminded Israel that He is Yahweh, the special name by which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew Him. He is "I AM WHO I AM," the self-existing one (Ex. 3:14). Second, the Lord said to Israel that He was their God. The other nations were not chosen by God. Israel had a special relationship with Him, and Yahweh was their God. Third, the Lord their God had delivered them from slavery. God had demonstrated His faithfulness and proved His love for Israel. Because of how God had revealed Himself to Israel, they were expected to obey His commands.

The Ten Commandments can be grouped into two general categories. The first four commands (Ex. 20:3–11) deal with man's relationship with God; the last six commands (Ex. 20:12–17) deal with man's relationships in the community. The first command was that Israel should have no other gods (Ex. 20:3). Yahweh had revealed Himself to the people, and He alone was to be worshiped. The second command (20:4–6) clarified the first. To bow down or serve any type of "carved image," regardless of whether the form was something in the heavens, the earth, or the sea, was idolatry. The people could not justify their idolatry by saying that the idol merely represented Yahweh. Yahweh is a jealous God, and it is idolatry for man to fashion the Creator in the image of His creation. It is such a serious sin that the spiritual depravity of such an act would be felt by future generations (20:5). (The Lord does not punish one generation for another's sin [Deut. 24:16], but children spiritually follow their parents and thus would follow in their idolatry.)

The command to not take the name of the Lord in vain specifically referred to swearing by God's name so the guilty party would appear truthful. This command does not specifically refer to modern swearing but would, of course, cover such blatant disrespect. The last of these four commands was to keep the Sabbath. The Sabbath had been set apart when God ceased from His work after creation (Ex. 20:11). The people were to cease from their labor and devote themselves to worshipping Yahweh.

The last six commands deal with man's relationship to the community. The fifth command was to honor father and mother. If Israel would obey this command and respect authority, God promised that Israel would not leave the land that God was giving them (Ex. 20:12). The next four commands were to not murder, commit adultery, steal, or bear false witness against one's neighbor (particularly referring to giving false testimony in a legal proceeding). The last command against coveting prevented the Israelites from merely thinking of these commands as outward. Someone might not give in to murder, adultery, stealing, or lying, but even the desire that led to these crimes was prohibited.

## The Purpose of the Ten Commandments

God had three main purposes in giving the Ten Commandments. The first is that they revealed His holiness. God is holy and commanded His people to be holy (Lev. 19:2). Israel was supposed to reflect both the separateness and the purity of God by following these commands. The commandments reflect also the righteous character of God, who always does right and gives only right commands. God so hated these sins that the death penalty was commanded for all of them in the Law (except for the command to not covet). God's holiness was to be characteristic of the Israelites. If they followed their sin nature and worshiped idols, profaned God or the Sabbath, dishonored their parents, killed, committed adultery, stole, or lied, they would suffer death. In giving His name to the Israelites, God required the Israelites to bring glory to that name.

The Ten Commandments also preserved the nation that God was creating. These commands were graciously given by God as the structure that would support the nation of Israel. By prohibiting idol worship and taking His name in vain, God exalted Himself as the only God, the God of Israel. The Sabbath day of worship, if followed, would keep Israel humble before God, always reminded of their unique relationship and complete dependence upon Him. It also would result in the resting of the people and the land. By commanding the honoring of parents, God preserved the way truth would be transmitted from parents to children. He also preserved an authority structure necessary for any nation's success. Life was shown to be valuable with the prohibition of murder. The commandment against adultery preserved the sanctity of marriage. The commandment against stealing preserved the ownership of property. The commandment against bearing false testimony preserved the judicial system and trust. Finally, the command to not covet showed that society cannot be sustained when everybody lusts after someone else's possessions; instead, society requires a greater love and a concern for another's welfare. In 10 laws, God graciously, perfectly, and wisely established the foundation for a nation. These commands were not overbearing, but were a demonstration of love for His nation.

The commands were also given to reveal sin. Salvation has never been gained by keeping the law. The perfect obedience required by God is impossible, and salvation has always been by faith (Gal. 3:11). But before salvation comes through faith, men must realize that they are being saved from sin. Through the Law, man becomes aware of his sin (Rom. 3:20; 7:7). Even the most righteous of men falls when judged by the last command, "You shall not covet." The Law was given so that man would see his nature and have complete dependence upon God. The Ten Commandments were graciously given by God. By following them, Israel would reflect God's holiness, have a prosperous nation, and come to saving faith.

## POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth"*  
(Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



### Review Questions

*Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.*

What promise did God give the Israelites?  
*Israel would be His special treasure and a holy people.*

What command did God give the Israelites?  
*Israel was to love and obey God's Word.*

Why could Israel not touch the mountain?  
*Because God is so holy and perfect, they were to be killed if they touched the mountain.*

What did the Israelites do to show that they knew God was holy?  
*They washed their clothes. Washing their clothes was a picture of their need to be forgiven.*

How did God reveal Himself on the mountain?  
*Thunder and lightning, a thick cloud, a loud trumpet, smoke, fire, an earthquake, and His voice.*

Because God is so holy, how should we live?  
*We should hate sin and obey God's Word.*



### Number Activities

Bring 10 pieces of cereal, buttons, beans, or coins. Help the students count the items. "God is going to give 10 rules for right living. Listen for this number in the Bible lesson. I wonder what those rules will say. Can you think of what some of them might be?"



### Obeying Our Parents

Have several pictures from magazines available to show adults interacting with children. Ask the students what they think is going on in the pictures. Talk about children needing to obey their parents because that is important to God. Obeying means doing what is asked. In today's Bible lesson, the Israelites promise to obey God. They promise to do what God the Father asks them to do.



### The Impossible Jump

Form a line with tape. Place a rope parallel to the tape line. Have students stand single file behind the tape line. Set the lines close enough together so that the students can easily jump across both lines at first. After everyone has a turn, move

the rope line farther away from the tape line. Have the students try again. Then pull the rope back so far that no one can make it. This is what it is like to try to make it to heaven on our own by doing good things. It is impossible. We must have someone help us. The Ten Commandments are God's holy rules that show us our sinfulness. We are unable to obey them perfectly, and we need a savior. In today's lesson, we will learn about those rules.

## PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

*"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).*

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

### Bible Lesson

#### Reading of the Text

Read Exodus 20:1–17.

When you ride in a car, do you notice lots of signs and lights around? Those are reminders that drivers need to obey laws, or rules, made for us by our government to keep us safe. Did you know that God made laws for us to obey? We find them in the Bible, God's Word. A long time ago, God wrote some special rules for us to obey, and He gave these laws to Moses.

Do you remember who Moses was? He was the leader God chose to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt. Moses tried hard to obey God and to help the people to obey God. The people of Israel knew that they should do what God wanted them to do, but they were afraid because God was so powerful. They asked Moses to talk to God for them. So he did. He went up on a high mountain and asked God to show him how to teach the people to do what is right.

God was pleased and spoke to Moses in a special way. Up on that mountain, God gave Moses a list of rules that we call the Ten Commandments. These commandments, or instructions, needed to be followed by God's people all the time.

First, God gave some rules that would help the people of Israel to think about Him the right way. He wanted them to remember that He is God and that He is in control. God said that there should never be any other god worshiped or obeyed except Himself. Nobody should ever make another god, called an idol, out of anything on earth. He also made a law that the people should take one day at the end of the week and not work or do jobs, so they could think only about God that day.

Next, God told Moses that there were going to be some new rules about how the people should treat one another. If they obeyed these laws, they would be kind to one another, but most importantly, God would be pleased. So, God said, no one should disobey their daddies and mommies. No one should ever steal or lie or be jealous of what somebody else has.

Moses wrote all these things down, came down from the mountain, and shared the good news with all the people. God loved them so much that He made a list of rules they were to obey. God would be pleased with them if they obeyed! They were told to be holy because they were God's people and because God is holy.

Just like signs and lights on the road, God gives us instructions in His Word that we should obey all the time. Let us tell God that we need His help to obey and ask Him to help us today.



## Lesson Questions

Who was Moses?

*The leader of the people of Israel.*

Did Moses love God?

Yes.

What did Moses do?

*He went up on the mountain to talk to God about the people of Israel.*

How did God share His rules, the Ten Commandments, with the people?

*He told them to Moses, who took them back to the people.*

What are some of these rules?

*Worship only God, take a rest one day each week to think about God, obey your parents, never steal, tell the truth about one another, and do not be jealous.*

Should we obey the Ten Commandments?

Yes.

Why should we obey the Ten Commandments?

*We must obey God. That is one way we can please Him and show that we love Him.*

## Presentation Ideas



### A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



### Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



### Treasure-Box Object

The object for the treasure box for this lesson is a rock-like tablet with words on it. These words represent the Law of God, which was given to Moses on Mount Sinai.



### False Idols

Take some class time to talk about the differences between the one true God and the false gods that we are told not to worship. False gods cannot hear, help, or act. They are created by men and are only pieces of wood or stone. Our God creates, keeps promises, hears prayers, has power, and is worthy of love and obedience.



Can trees hear our prayers? Can God hear our prayers? Can stones change the weather? Can God change the weather? Can shiny gold or silver jewelry keep promises? Can God keep promises? Can statues love us? Can God love us?

## Praise and Worship

*Holy, Holy*

*Seek Ye First*

*The B-I-B-L-E*

*This Is My Commandment*

*Trust and Obey*



## The Ten Commandments

God was ready to make His covenant.

*(Point up; then hold hand over heart.)*

He began with the Ten Commandments.

*(Hold up ten fingers.)*

Commandments one, two, three, and four,

*(Count one to four with fingers.)*

Tell us how to love the Lord.

*(Hug self; then point up.)*

Five, six, seven, eight, nine, and ten,

*(Count five to ten with fingers.)*

Tell us how to act toward men.

*(Move extended hand from one side to the other, indicating the seated children.)*

Israel stood in fear and awe,

*(Stand stiffly, look up, and open mouth.)*

But Moses went to hear God's Law.

*(Lean forward and put hand to ear.)*

## PRACTICE THE TRUTH

*"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).*

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



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## Listening for God's Commands

This game is played like "Steal the Bacon." Divide the class into two teams. (This game will work best if there are 20 players in all.) Line up the teams in two lines,

facing each other. The lines should be 15–20 feet apart if you have the room. Give each player on the first team a commandment to remember. Then, beginning at the opposite end of the other team’s line, give each player a commandment. Between the teams, on the carpet in the center, place the “stone tablets.” (See how creative you can be to come up with these.) This is the “bacon.” Then call out a commandment. The two students who have been assigned that commandment run forward and try to snatch the stone tablets and successfully run back to their line with the tablets and without being tagged by their opponent. If a player reaches his line with the tablets without being tagged, his team gets a point. If the student carrying the stone tablets is tagged, the other team gets a point. You can call out more than one commandment at a time to make things really interesting. The students will really need to be ready and listening for God’s words to be the first to return with the tablets.



### God’s Rule

Help each student to make a Bible from a piece of black construction paper folded in half. Inside, place a sheet of white paper, also folded in half. Print God’s rule “Honor your father and your mother” in each student’s book. Read with each student, placing his finger under each word as you say it. Encourage him to “read” the rule back to you.



### Moses Relay

Students can pretend to be Moses. Divide the class into two teams, and divide each team into pairs. One student from each pair should pretend to be walking up a mountain by lifting his legs up as high as he can as he goes to a table on the other side of the room. There, he picks up a pretend tablet and walks back, giving it to his partner, who gets to return it to the table. Then the next pair does the same thing. See which team finishes first.



### God’s Laws Necklace

Materials: “Ten Commandments” sheet (at the back of this lesson), dry cereal or beads, yarn

Directions: Let students string dry cereal or beads and the tablet-shaped commandments onto a piece of yarn. Tie the necklaces around their necks as a reminder of the rules God wants us to obey.



### Making Moses Memories

Choose a coloring page and reduce it to 4 x 6 inches. Have each student color the page, cut it out, and glue it to the next page in his scrapbook. At the end of the Exodus series, students may take home their completed scrapbooks.

### Coloring Sheets

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of this lesson. The students can color the pages in class or at home.



### MEMORY VERSE

“You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15).



### Eighth Commandment

God gives us the eighth commandment to protect property from being stolen. Stealing is taking something that belongs to someone else. Have you ever stolen

anything? How would you feel if someone stole your favorite toy? Greed, covetousness, and selfishness motivate stealing. Stealing shows a lack of regard for others. Because the motive behind stealing is selfish and not based on love, God does not want us to steal!



# Ten Commandments

**One**  
"You shall have no other gods before Me."  
*Exodus 20:3*

**Two**  
"You shall not make for yourself a carved image."  
*Exodus 20:4*

**Three**  
"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain."  
*Exodus 20:7*

**Four**  
"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."  
*Exodus 20:8*

**Five**  
"Honor your father and your mother."  
*Exodus 20:12*

**Six**  
"You shall not murder."  
*Exodus 20:13*

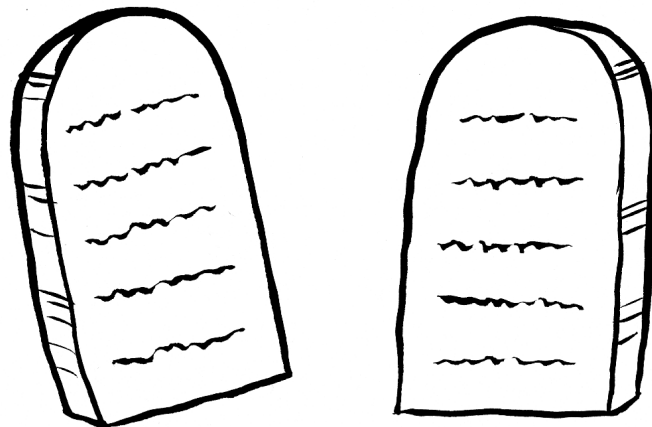
**Seven**  
"You shall not commit adultery."  
*Exodus 20:14*

**Eight**  
"You shall not steal."  
*Exodus 20:15*

**Nine**  
"You shall not bear false witness."  
*Exodus 20:16*

**Ten**  
"You shall not covet."  
*Exodus 20:17*





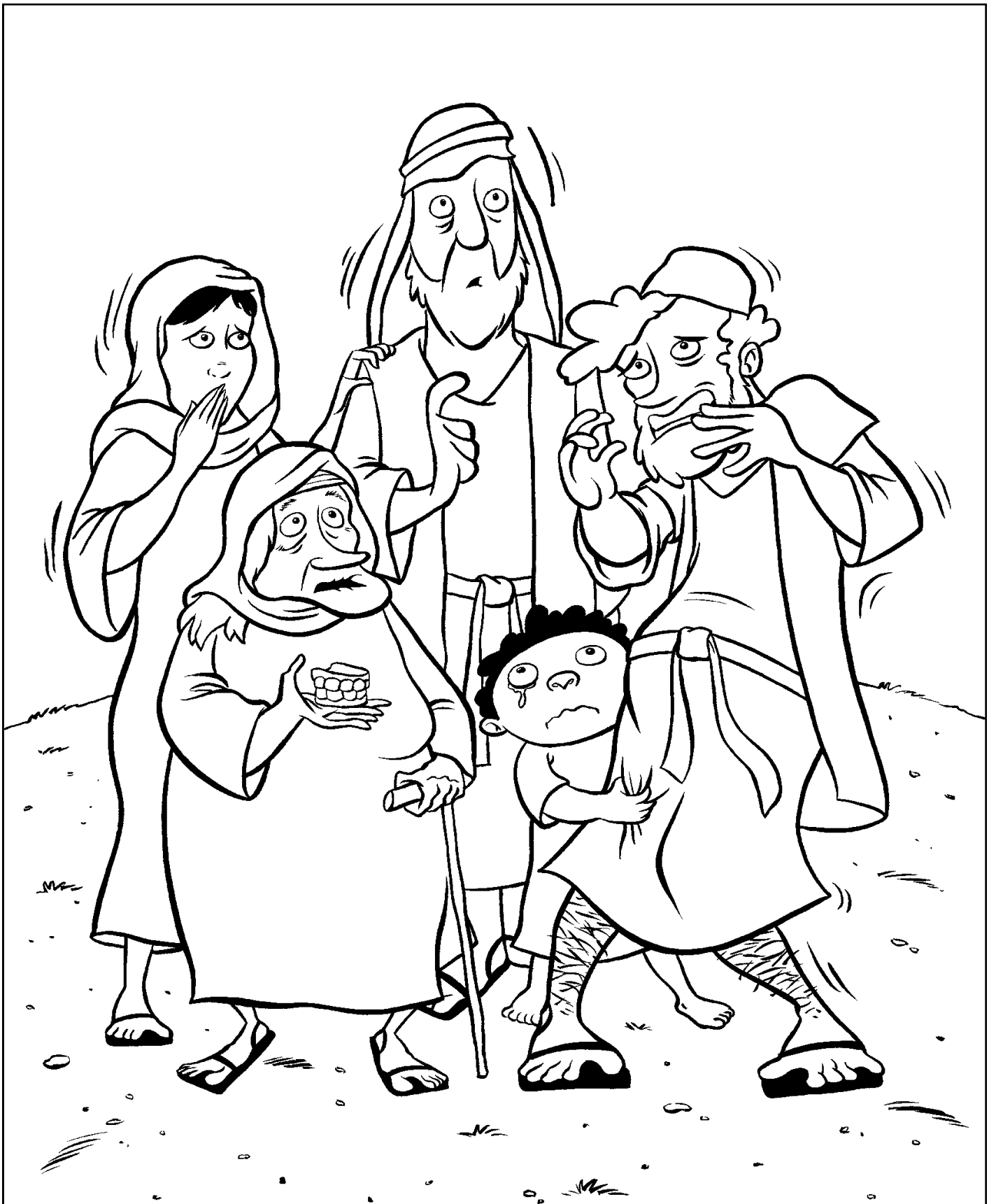






**Moses received the commandments from God in the midst of the cloud of God's glory (Exodus 24:12-18).**





**“Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off” (Exodus 20:18).**

