

OPENING HYMN

“Open Your Ears, O Faithful People”
(ELW 519)

OPENING PRAYER

Living God, whom we are called to fear and love, root us in your word. Guide and shape us, nourish our minds and our characters, so that we may bear the fruits of your goodness in our homes and communities. In the name of the Living Word, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

FOCUS VERSE

Then God spoke all these words, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:1-3a)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bibles (NRSV)
- *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW)
- Paper and pencils, or whiteboard
- (Optional) *The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther 1529: The Annotated Luther Study Edition*, ed. Kirsi I. Stjerna (Fortress Press, 2016), and *Luther’s Small Catechism with African Descent Reflections*, ed. Joseph Bocko (Augsburg Fortress, 2019)

The Ten Commandments: Reviving the soul

Session one

Dancing the Decalogue
(Commandments 1 and 2)

BY CHRISTA VON ZYCHLIN

INTRODUCTION

Years ago, during a visit to the Wailing Wall, the last remaining structure of the Great Temple in Jerusalem, I was astonished to see a group of grizzled old men dancing and singing with gusto. “What’s that all about?” I asked my Jewish friend.

“They’re celebrating the gift of the law of God given at Mount Sinai,” he replied.

I was dumbfounded. As a Lutheran Christian, I understood freedom from religious legalisms as the great spiritual gift of the Reformation. Hadn’t Jesus and, later, Paul shown us how law and gospel were opposed to each other, placing us Lutherans firmly on Team Gospel? I had associated Judaism with a curmudgeonly emphasis on exactly 613 Old Testament laws (the first 10 being the Ten Commandments), upon which (in my understanding) the Catholic Church had built a whole additional structure of rules or legalisms like attending weekly Mass, going to confession, and abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent. Religious laws, in my mind, had to do with outdated “shoulds,” shame and attention to odd minutiae. Head coverings? Food laws? Repressive sexuality? Arbitrary *rules* are what gives religion a bad name, right?

But that day I realized something: God’s law is a great *gift*—one to celebrate with joy. Later I learned

about *Shavuot*, a festival of Pentecost that has been humorously called “the most important Jewish holiday you’ve never heard of.” Celebrated 50 days after Passover, it’s a kind of spiritual wedding fest, marking the day God “betrothed” Godself to the ancient Israelites and their descendants through the gift of the Torah (law) on Mount Sinai.

Sixteenth-century reformer Martin Luther also spoke in lofty, mystical terms about the Ten Commandments. In his preface to the Small Catechism—a little book he wrote to teach Christianity 101—Luther says:

Then this must be certain: those who know the Ten Commandments perfectly know the entire Scriptures and in all affairs and circumstances are able to counsel, help, comfort, judge, and make decisions in both spiritual and temporal matters.

— quoted in *The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther 1529*, p. 294.

During this four-session Bible study, we’ll enjoy the challenge and pleasure of meditating on the Ten Commandments, trusting that, as Martin Luther reminds us:

God’s word is not like some idle tale... but, as St. Paul says in Romans 1:16, it is “the power of God,” indeed, the power of God that burns the devil’s house down and gives us immeasurable strength, comfort, and help.

— *The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther 1529*, p. 292.

Now let’s burn that devil’s house down!

Share aloud or reflect:

1. In all honesty, when you hear the term The Ten Commandments, what first comes to mind? How do you feel? Below,

circle three words that seem most appropriate, or add your own:

Harsh, Shame, Judgment, Power,
Guilt, Joy, Excitement, Boredom, Trust,
Confidence, Fear, Peace, Love, Security,
Outdated, Goodness, Sin, Guidance,
Irrelevant, Timeless, Clear, Complicated,
Delight, Defeating-the-devil

2. Can you share a specific image or memory of where you first *learned* about God’s law? (This might be from Sunday school, confirmation, catechism or anywhere.)

AN INVITATION TO DELIGHT

As we begin our study of the Ten Commandments, Psalm 119 deserves special attention. It is no accident that the longest psalm (the longest chapter in the whole Bible!) is a love poem—an alphabet of praise—for God’s teaching, law and commandments. Using synonyms and poetic parallelism, Psalm 119 goes through each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, naming some challenges that bedevil us in life and extolling the goodness and remedy of God’s law. In this psalm, God’s word and teaching are an invitation to live the good life.

It’s a bit like receiving a text message from someone: *Call me tonight!* Would you see this as a command, or as a new world of possibility? Well, it all depends on the relationship. If the message comes from someone with whom you’ve been in conflict, your heart might sink. If it comes from someone at your workplace, you might feel resentful about this demand on your time. But if it comes from someone you’d love to have a deeper relationship with—a friend, favorite niece or potential romantic interest—then you might consider it a gift, not a chore, to “obey” the command, and you would eagerly call!

In the same vein, Psalm 119 demonstrates the biblical tradition of embracing the Ten Commandments as God calling us into a relationship of goodness and delight, with practical, real-world implications. So, let's dig into this goodness, considering how we respond.

Read aloud the following Bible verses. Using a pencil, underline the words *law* and *commandment* wherever they appear. Either circle or draw a little heart on each of the positive words (happy, wondrous, delight, love) in these same verses.

📖 **Read:** Psalm 1:1–2, 19:7; 119:1, 18, 47–48, 97, 142–143

Psalm 1

- ¹ *Happy are those
who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;*
- ² *but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law they meditate day and night.*

Psalm 19

- ⁷ *The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the Lord are sure,
making wise the simple.*

Psalm 119

- ¹ *Happy are those whose way is blameless, who
walk in the law of the Lord.*
- ¹⁸ *Open my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous
things out of your law.*
- ⁴⁷ *I find my delight in your commandments,
because I love them.*
- ⁴⁸ *I revere your commandments, which I love, and I
will meditate on your statutes.*
- ⁹⁷ *Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all
day long.*

¹⁴² *Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
and your law is the truth.*

¹⁴³ *Trouble and anguish have come upon me, but
your commandments are my delight.*

Share aloud or reflect:

3. What surprising word pairings do you find? Is this a novel way for you to look at God's word and commandments?

AN INVITATION TO CONFIDENCE

Psalm 119 recognizes that all is not right with the world. Recently, our congregation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, listened as a seasoned juvenile parole officer shared her near despair at the amount of lawlessness young teenagers experience in their neighborhoods, schools and even homes. Drug use, sexual abuse and crime are rampant and span the generations.

Another challenge is the status of immigrants and “aliens.” How do we welcome the stranger, manage limited resources, and learn to love new neighbors with vastly different cultures and languages from our own? How do we not become overwhelmed by all the practical needs?

A third widespread challenge is hypocrisy in politics and religion. While politicians run buoyant ads promising the solutions to all that ails, long after the election the sense of well-being in our neighborhoods has not improved. Lawsuits abound, yet true justice eludes us. At the same time, so many churches loudly claim to keep Jesus Christ as Savior at the center, yet utterly fail to follow his teachings.

As you read each of the following verses from Psalm 119, draw a question mark or an exclamation point by any words (for example, *alien* or *languish*) that remind you of a dilemma or a challenging situation (or in Luther's terms, an onslaught of the devil!) today.

📖 **Read:** Psalm 119: 9, 19, 81–82, 84–86, 95, and 113–115

- ⁹ *How can young people keep their way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.*
- ¹⁹ *I live as an alien in the land;
do not hide your commandments from me.*
- ⁸¹ *My soul languishes for your salvation;
I hope in your word.*
- ⁸² *My eyes fail with watching for your promise;
I ask, “When will you comfort me?”*
- ⁸⁴ *How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?*
- ⁸⁵ *The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me;
they flout your law.*
- ⁸⁶ *All your commandments are enduring;
I am persecuted without cause; help me!*
- ⁹⁵ *The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider your decrees.*
- ¹¹³ *I hate the double-minded,
but I love your law.*
- ¹¹⁴ *You are my hiding place and my shield;
I hope in your word.*
- ¹¹⁵ *Go away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commandments of my God.*

Share aloud or reflect:

4. What problems and issues might the psalmist be facing? How do these evoke current challenges in your own home-town or state?

THE TEN WHAT?

📖 **Read:** Exodus 20:1–17

Share aloud or reflect:

5. What heading does your Bible use for this chapter of Exodus? Now turn to Deuteronomy 5:6–21, which lists the commandments a second time, and note the heading used there. Does anyone in your group have a version of the Bible that uses a different heading?

You may have already noticed that Psalm 119 uses the words *commandments*, *law*, *words* and *teachings* almost interchangeably. Yet distinct Hebrew words exist for each of these concepts. We pay special attention to three Hebrew words, translated in most Bibles as follows:

***torah*:** law. (Note: This word can also mean “God’s teachings.” Or, capitalized, it can refer to the first five books of the Bible.)

***mitzvot*:** commandments.

***davar/davarim*:** word/words, sayings or things.

It may surprise you (it did me!) that while most of our Bibles use “The Ten Commandments” as the heading for Exodus 20, these commands are never actually called the Ten Commandments (*mitzvot*) in biblical Hebrew. Rather, they are the Ten *Davarim*—a phrase meaning the Ten Sayings, the Ten Words or even the Ten Things. In Psalm 119, notice how the psalmist uses “word” (*davar*) and the positive associations involved.

📖 **Read:** Psalm 119:9, 25, 105, 169 and Exodus 20:1

Share aloud or reflect:

6. Although we’ll follow tradition and

usually refer to them as the “Ten Commandments,” how might thinking of these as “Ten Words” from God alter our perception of them? In your opinion, are the Ten Commandments meant to be one-sided decrees, or does God invite us into dialogue through them?

FIRST THINGS FIRST: THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

📖 **Read:** Exodus 2:23–25 and 20:1–3

Finally, we have come to the first of the Ten Commandments. But wait, what is the first commandment? In the Bible, these commands are neither called the Ten Commandments (it’s just the heading), nor are they numbered. And sure enough, different traditions count them differently. Here is the first “commandment” in Jewish tradition:

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (Exodus 20:2)

It’s not a commandment at all, according to our usual understanding of the word. This “commandment” is a word or statement of history, confidence and hope. Our African Descent siblings are helping the wider church to reclaim this bold first word from God, as we see in the following commentary, available in a recent publication of reflections on Luther’s Small Catechism:

[God is], first and foremost, ... intimately connected with our history and with the history of our deliverance. Our lives are claimed by God, who is our liberator and redeemer. Each time God’s name is proclaimed, it should remind us of all that God has been and done on our behalf. Our God is on the side of the oppressed and dispossessed.

—*Luther’s Small Catechism with African Descent Reflections*, p. 13.

If someone were to ask me, “Who is God?” I might be tempted to begin with the grand cosmic picture. “God is the One who created heaven and earth, light and matter, galaxies beyond galaxies...,” I might say. But in Exodus 20, God speaks to Moses and the Israelites with a different, more historically grounded, more intimately relevant story. It’s as though God is saying: *I’m the Ear that heard your groans. I’m the Presence who opened the path through the Red Sea. I’m the Arm who wrestled you and your children free from Pharaoh’s brick-making plantation.*

Share aloud or reflect:

7. Is there a historical or metaphorical “land of slavery” from which God delivered your parents, grandparents or earlier ancestors? (These might include actual slavery, poverty, prison, war, addictions, illness or family tragedy.) In what way(s) was God actively involved in that deliverance?
8. If you can, share a specific way in which God has opened a path for your liberation in the last 50 days.

A CALL AND A CLAIM

📖 **Read:** Exodus 20:2–5a

First, God identifies Godself as the One who has powerfully and compassionately helped the Israelites. Then God makes a claim on the Israelites, with what Jews call the second “word” and most Christians call the first commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3).

Lutherans and Catholics generally consider the verses about not making or bowing to idols as commentary on the first commandment. However, most Protestant churches, wanting to reject what they consider a misplaced Roman Catholic emphasis on saints, statues and relics, give the part about not making idols its own number. For these churches, this is the second commandment.

In any case, what Martin Luther captures so nicely in his commentary on this commandment is how we define God. God, according to Luther, is “that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need.” Luther also states: “Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God” (*The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther 1529*, p. 300).

It’s easy for many of us Lutheran and Protestant Christians to breeze over the first commandment and this business about idols. After all, I don’t pray to Mars, Athena or Venus. Nor do I fast and pray to St. Apollonia if I have a toothache or ask St. Roche to protect me from the plague of COVID-19. (These were popular saints Luther alluded to in the *Large Catechism*.) I’m tempted to look down on folks who trust in Facebook “likes” or in Instagram influencers, or who dabble in astrology or certain recently legalized herbal chews! But as I write this, the stock market is tanking, the political landscape is bitter, and congregations are disrupted and closing. Maybe I do put confidence into my savings account. And my mood can rise and fall with my medical lab report...my children’s accomplishments...or the success of the business I have worked for my whole life, even if (in my case) it is the church, whose overall numbers and status are declining in my country.

Share aloud or reflect:

9. Using Luther’s definition of a god (anything on which your heart relies and depends), what would you say are the

most prevalent gods in our society today?

10. Which “other gods” are you personally most tempted to turn to?

A CALAMITY

📖 **Read:** Exodus 20:5–6; 24:15–18 and 31:18–32:10

The calamity occurs almost before the clay tablets—upon which God had written the commandments with God’s own finger—have dried. Moses has been up on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and nights, hidden in fire and clouds. Who knew if he was even still alive, or if he was ever going to come down? Can we blame the Israelites for wanting a focal point for their worship? Wasn’t it rather noble of them to sacrifice their personal jewelry to fashion a communal artwork, a golden calf, symbolic of hope, milk and meat, and shining festivity?

What do we make of these Bible passages? We have a threat from a jealous God about “*punishing children for the iniquity of parents to the third and the fourth generation...*” And then the utter fury of a God who says to Moses, “*Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them...*”

In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther starts every one of his explanations of the Ten Commandments with the statement, “We are to fear and love God...” Every time I teach the Small Catechism to yet another group of confirmation students, I ask myself: *Do I really believe this? Must I teach this?* It goes completely against our culture, but it’s true to the scriptural witness—we have a *passionate* God who loves us fiercely and with high expectations.

I once talked with a guy in his 20s about the fact that he was living with one woman, had a young

child with another and was probably heading back to jail for some petty theft he had committed while out on probation. “So where do you see God in all of this?” I asked, since he had volunteered to me that he was a born-again Christian.

“Oh, man, he’s a loving god, he saved me, he means everything to me,” the young man testified, tears brimming in his eyes.

“Do you think that’s also the same God who said, ‘Don’t steal’ and ‘Don’t commit adultery?’” I asked. He looked at me, horrified—and rightly so, since I was obviously talking about a different God than the one he knew. His god, made in his own image, wouldn’t think of asking him to give up anything like getting high with his friends or variety in his sex life.

Share aloud or reflect:

11. Do you think these Bible readings clash or correspond with the God we worship at church most Sundays? Is there ever a time when fear is an appropriate response to God? Why or why not?
12. What “false god” (alcoholism, workaholism, nationalism and racism come to mind) in your parents’ or grandparents’ generation has had a negative influence “to the third or fourth generation”?
13. God also makes a promise of “*showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.*” What love-of-God blessing has been passed on to you from distant generations or ancestors, or from faith mentors?

THE NAME IN CAPS

■ **Read:** Exodus 3:1–6; 3:13–15 and 20:7

I had to giggle when I walked into our congregation’s youth room and saw that a well-meaning person had posted a “kid-friendly” version of the Ten Commandments—one where the second commandment is simply, “Don’t curse.” The thing is, I’m not sure the Ten Commandments were meant to be “kid-friendly.” We routinely underestimate the ability of children to understand solemn sacredness.

Rough-edged stories from the Bible, including this one from the beginning of Exodus, kindled my childhood fascination and love for God. In response to a flaming shrub in the wilderness, Moses meets a fierce God who summons him to a demanding career change. Moses will go into the seat of power (at that time, the land of Egypt) and bring God’s enslaved people out. It’s then that God also reveals the mysterious name, usually translated as “*I AM WHO I AM*,” using the Tetragrammaton—the four Hebrew letters that most of our Jewish siblings consider too holy to write or pronounce.

To this day, observant Jews will write God’s name as G_D or call God “*Hashem*” (meaning “the Name”) to honor God’s name, thus keeping the commandment to not misuse it. A vestige of this respect hides in plain sight in most of our Bibles. Wherever you see the word Lord in all caps (such as in Exodus 3:15 and Exodus 20:7), it signals that the holy Tetragrammaton, the name too precious to pronounce, is used in the Hebrew text.

Now, in an age of declining interest in and practice of both Judaism and Christianity, I wonder if the commandment not to misuse God’s name may have less to do with swearing, and more to do with a quote I saw recently on Facebook:

Do not be too quick to condemn the man who no longer believes in God: for it is perhaps your own

coldness and avarice and mediocrity and materialism and selfishness that have chilled his faith...

—Thomas Merton

Similarly, if an atheist or an agnostic or a child swears using God's name, this won't do nearly the damage done by one so-called Christian saying they are a follower of Jesus Christ and then spoiling that name by not acting Christ-like. As St. Paul says to the Romans: "For as it is written, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Romans 2:24).

IDENTITY THEFT

📖 **Read:** Romans 2:19–24

Full-blown identity theft has never happened to me, but I've come close. Somebody once used my credit card to order massive amounts of fast food in and around a city in Florida. (I live and buy my fast food exclusively in New Mexico, and never ten times in one day!) Although that bit of identity theft was almost funny, and was quickly resolved, it served as a warning to me of how easy it would be to have my good name and credit destroyed. My indignation and sense of violation were perhaps a small taste of what God feels when God's name and credit are used falsely by so-called Christian political organizations and hate groups, or by insinuating and judgmental attitudes expressed by me or someone in my own congregation.

Once again, I find a helpful commentary in *Luther's Small Catechism with African Descent Reflections*:

We misuse the Lord's name when we use it to invoke harm upon another person. Calling for blessing to come upon anyone is all right. Using God's name to unleash mischief or curses upon anyone is prohibited. We must not make our religion a club or

weapon with which to have our way over others.
(p. 15)

GIVING GLORY TO GOD

📖 **Read:** Matthew 5:14–16

Share aloud or reflect:

14. Most of us would have no trouble listing groups that give Christianity a bad name—political groups, militias, churches known for whom they would *exclude* rather than for those they *include* through Christ's self-emptying love for all. Instead, see if you can conclude this session (and further stomp the devil's house, to paraphrase Luther!) by producing a list of modern-day individuals or groups who "light up the world" in such a way as to honor the name of Christ, and so fulfill the first and second commandments.

CLOSING HYMN

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (*ELW* 504, verse 4)

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for loving us enough to confront us with your word. Thank you for reviving in us a sense of your reality, your holiness and your high expectations for our lives. By your Holy Spirit, renew our confidence and integrity so that we may gladly, confidently love and serve you and our neighbor. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. 🌿

The Ten Commandments: Reviving the soul

Session one

Dancing the Decalogue

BY CHRISTA VON ZYCHLIN

OVERVIEW

Thanks for taking time to consider how to lead your group through what could be considered a daunting Bible study challenge—the Ten Commandments!

Fortunately for all of us, Martin Luther wrote a remarkably accessible and lively commentary on the Ten Commandments in his Large Catechism. You can find a copy in church libraries or online by googling “Luther’s Large Catechism.” You may also wish to get ahold of three very enjoyable optional resources that I will occasionally quote in this four-session study:

- *The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther 1529: The Annotated Luther Study Edition*, ed. Kirsi I. Stjerna (Fortress Press, 2016). I enjoy the lively translation and helpful notes that appear in this edition. The more than 500-year-old text still makes sense and often causes me to laugh aloud. Luther minces no words about people who think they can fully appreciate the commandments from just one reading, or from having memorized them.
- *Luther’s Small Catechism with African Descent Reflections*, ed. Joseph Bocko (Augsburg Fortress, 2019). This book offers a cultural perspective that sheds beneficial new light on how the Ten Commandments speak to us today.
- *Luther’s Small Catechism: An Exposition of the Christian Faith in Asian Contexts and Cultures*,

ed. J. Paul Rajashekar (The Association of Asians and Pacific Islander, ELCA, 2019). This resource also addresses the Ten Commandments from a cultural lens that provides valuable insights for readers.

While I use and recommend the NRSV translation of the Bible for these studies, sometimes it’s helpful to hear passages read aloud from different translations. You’ll notice the way different Bible editors frame passages with different headings. I’m a particular fan of *The Message*, which is not a word-for-word translation, but carries the sense and feeling of a passage in a vibrant new way.

HOSPITALITY

Please consider inviting someone new to your group. Consider questions such as these: How could our group help them to feel wanted and treasured? Would someone appreciate a ride? Or the reassurance that our group doesn’t claim to have all the answers, but sincerely needs different perspectives? Are our bathrooms accessible? Do we welcome someone who may not be gender conforming? Do our snacks offer enough variety for those with dietary restrictions? Are we sensitive to those who may not want to read aloud or who may have trouble finding the right book in the Bible?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. If you have time, consider asking participants to bring a “show & tell” or “group collage” visual image related to the session theme (for example, something that reminds them of Luther’s explanation of the first commandment: “We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things”). And if participants are willing, someone in the group could turn these into a group collage.
2. If this study is part of a retreat or if your congregation is looking for an adult education class to offer, you might invite a local rabbi or Jewish friend or neighbor to come and share some

highlights related to the meaning and practice of the Shavuot holiday. Alternatively, someone in the group may want to research this ahead of time.

DOING THE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Q1. Assure participants there is no right or wrong answer.

Q2. You'll likely hear a few stories from confirmation classes, so be sensitive to people who may never have learned or studied the commandments before.

Q3. Physically circling and underlining words helps us to make connections and remember them for later reference.

Q4. Keep a list of the problems discussed for possible later reference. The language used in the Ten Words can give us theological reference points for debate of real issues in current times.

Q5. While most Bibles use the heading of "The Ten Commandments," you may find one that uses "The Ten Sayings" or "The Ten Words."

Q6. This is a leading question, since I obviously think they are invitations to thought and dialogue. At the same time, I agree with those who say there is a reason they are known as the Ten Commandments rather than the Ten Suggestions—note that neither of these terms is actually biblical!

Q7 & Q8. Either of these questions could lead to quite deep testimonies of faith. This is where you as a leader are so important, in discerning how much time to allow for sharing, and if and how to guide the discussion.

Q9. If your group needs prompting, you could think about the most pervasive TV ads—ads for insurance, cars, beer and medicine come to mind. How do these reflect modern-day gods?

Q10. As a leader, model by being brutally honest about your own temptation to "other gods."

Q11. On the question of fearing God, I hope I hear from some of you how you have experienced this seeming contradiction in our faith lives.

Q12 & Q13. These two questions could be handled

like the suggestions for 7 and 8 above.

Q14. This question is meant to end the session on a positive, forward-thinking note. How do we rightly worship and honor the one true God? Responses could include organizations such as Lutheran World Relief, historical saints such as St. Francis of Assisi, more recent individuals such as Dorothy Day or Mother Teresa or a current favorite of mine, Francis S. Collins, the 2020 Templeton Prize winner and recently retired director of the National Institutes of Health. You can learn more about Dr. Collins with this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FYvi8qwp7Og>. I hope you will make a long list of people whose light shines in such a way as to glorify God's name.

SHORT STUDY (30 MINUTES)

1. **Introduction** – Do Q1. (Skip Q2.)
2. **An invitation to delight** – Do Q3. (Skip An invitation to confidence and Q4.)
3. **The ten what?** (but skip the actual Exodus 20:1-17 reading; just find the headings) – Do Q5. (Skip Q6.)
4. **First things first: The first commandment** (but skip Qs 7 & 8).
5. **A call and a calm** – Do Qs 9 & 10 (but keep it short!). (Skip A calamity and Qs 11, 12, 13.)
6. **The name in caps** (Skip **Identity theft**.)
7. **Giving glory to God** (but keep discussion of Q14 short – tell participants to keep thinking about it during the coming month).
8. **End with verse 4 of "A Mighty Fortress"**—it's just too good not to sing it!

A LITTLE LONGER (45-75 minutes)

As above, but add the opening hymn and add Qs. 7 & 8 back in. Also include Identity theft section, and spend a little longer on Q14 as your last question. 🌿