

Aim of lesson

To see the law given through Moses as an expansion in practical detail of loving God, loving your neighbour and God's love for his people.

Bible background

Exodus 20; Leviticus 19; Matthew 22:36-40.

Outline of lesson

Ten Commandments

Begin the lesson by asking the class if they can remember what the Ten Commandments are, and get them to write them in the box in the workbook.

A holy nation

Ask the class what they think God's purpose was in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. Was it just to free them from slavery and then to leave them to make the best of it on their own? Or did he have something better planned for them? When they have made suggestions take them to Exodus 19:3-6. The Israelites were to be a holy nation, God's special treasure. Having freed them from the Egyptians, God did not leave them to be slaves to ignorance; he taught them about himself, and about life. He gave them the law.

Explain that the law is contained in the chapters from Exodus 20 to the end of the book of Deuteronomy and occupies the majority of those chapters. It covers all aspects of life; justice, health, worship, etc. Note that the next lesson deals with the instructions about worship.

The royal law

Tell the class that the Lord Jesus said that the whole of this law could be summed up in two commands – turn to Matthew 22:36-40. The children should then write these two commands in spaces 1 and 2. Explain statement 3, namely that some of the laws, health laws in particular, show God's loving care for His people. 'Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law' (Romans 13:10).

The law was a schoolmaster

You may like to work through the first group of references with the class, discussing each of the Ten Commandments in turn to decide what it teaches us about what love involves. Make notes of your conclusions in the appropriate box for example.

1. Respect, obeying God, recognising who he is, worshipping only him, trusting him.
2. Thinking of others, putting them first, not hating or harming, wanting their good, caring for the needs of the poor, strangers and disabled, being honest, considerate, not prejudiced, not retaliating, respecting old, caring for young.
3. Thinking about their needs, health, not letting them hurt themselves or be deceived.

You may then like to divide the class into two groups to look at the other references and report back.

Digging deeper

Looking forward to Jesus from the first five books

In previous 'Digging deeper' we have seen events which foreshadow Jesus – Joseph (Lesson 11), Out of Egypt (16), and the Bronze Serpent (17). Here we see other passages from the first five books which tell of Jesus, and two passages where Jesus refers to himself in relation to the wilderness journey.

Relevance to our lives

Ask the class to choose one of the points they have brought out on the sheet which they could put into practice during the week, e.g. 'respect for old' – they could individually visit an old person they know, or as a small group visit with you an old member of your meeting to read the Bible with them or do small tasks. Alternatively, your class may choose to help the poor, or a blind or disabled person whom they know.

Prayer

Dear Father, thank you for teaching us about yourself and about how to love. Help us to learn and to put your teaching into practice.

Other suggestions for activities

- One way to convey the positive good that the law of Moses taught may be to make a large wall illustration showing what God did not want them to do – kill, steal, lie, put stumbling blocks before the blind, let the poor starve. The illustrations could probably be cut from newspapers and magazines; include the headlines. The positive teaching of the law should be put next to it.
- Your class may be interested to look at the health laws; those about food, washing, isolation from disease, etc., and to compare when modern science caught up with these standards. You will find the book 'None of these Diseases' by S.I. MacMillen and David E Stern very helpful on this subject, if you can get hold of a copy (it is currently available from the Christadelphian Office).