

# Freedom is Obedience (Exodus 20:1-17)

## Video 1

In previous weeks, we've watched God deliver his people from slavery. We've seen God liberate his people from Egypt. And he's outlined his plan. He'll take them to the Promised Land, where they will enjoy freedom.

Before they get there, there's an important step in this freedom project. God must give his people the Ten Commandments.

We find this strange! How can laws lead to freedom? This is the question we're exploring today.

There's a clue at the beginning of the chapter. God sets the context for everything else he'll say:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

God is emphasising what is already true. He has *already* brought his people out of Egypt. He *is* 'their God.' Long before they have a chance of obeying any command.

If we're to properly understand the Ten Commandments, we must place them within a story. And here's the important detail to that story. God issues commands to his people *long after* he has first freed them from slavery.

This corrects where we often go wrong. We imagine that God says his rescue is dependent on people obeying his commands. But the Exodus story has a different shape. Rescue first, obedience second.

It's a pattern echoed throughout the Bible. Our obedience is only ever a response to what God has *already done*.

So why should we obey him? Because we know he's a God committed to our freedom. And because of this, even his commandments are an invitation to live in that freedom.

This is a challenge to how we often think about freedom. We think that freedom is doing whatever we want, whenever we want. And whilst that's our way of thinking, we'll always struggle with any commandment placed upon us.

Yet we know that freedom must be more than just being able to do what we want. Why? Because we know that it's possible to freely choose things that destroy us.

Think of the alcoholic or the workaholic. Think of the porn addict or the lonely billionaire. Each of them shows that choosing can lead us into a kind of slavery. To be truly free, we need more.

And that's where the Bible's view of freedom is so different.

Yes, the ability to make choices is important. True freedom involves being able to choose without being manipulated or coerced.

But, says the Bible, there's a more significant ingredient to freedom.

Freedom is living out what we were made for.

An eagle is free in the sky. A whale is free in the ocean. And we're free when we know what we were made for – and we live it out.

So come back to the Ten Commandments.

Because here's their genius. They help us learn God's purposes for us. God gave us the Ten Commandments to help us live as we were made to live. In harmony with each other and with the world.

And, as we'll see, because the living God is a God of love – at the heart of the Ten Commandments is a call to relationship.