

When you hear the term “The Big Ten,” you probably think about the athletic conference that includes your favorite team: Wisconsin and my favorite team: Michigan. Here’s an interesting fun fact ... the Big 10 Conference has a total of 14 schools in it.

But don’t underestimate the importance of the number 10. • 10 fingers and 10 toes • 10 numbers in your phone number • 10 dimes in a dollar • 10 yards to get a first down • Don’t forget those 10 lords-a-leaping

The number 10 is a significant Bible number, as well. When we’ve come across the number 10 in our Revelation Bible study, it signifies completeness. Nothing is more complete than God’s Law - the 10 Commandments.

Many see this Big 10 as 10 obstacles - to find a way around; or as 10 roadblocks - to keep us from having fun in life. Before we learn more about what they are and why God gave them to us, let’s check the context, the setting, in which God gave The Big Ten to Israel.

God is the one who initiated the relationship with Israel. In love, he freed them from 400 years of Egyptian slavery, through a series of 10 plagues (*there’s that number again.*) The 10 Commandments would serve as the framework for God’s people.

3 months after leaving Egypt, Israel was camped near what the people referred to as: “*The mountain of the Lord.*” It was here, that the LORD, who had freed them, promised: “*I will be your God and you will be my treasured people ... if you obey me.*” Their approval was loud and unanimous: “**We will do everything the LORD has said.**”

For 3 days the Israelites prepared for their meeting with God. Finally, the day came when God would tell them what he expected of them. The LORD put on a display unlike anything anywhere. There was thunder and lightning and trumpet blasts. A dark cloud covered the mountain as it shook. The mountain wasn’t the only thing shaking. The people were terrified and begged Moses: “**Speak**

to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”

That’s when Moses headed up the mountain and received The Big Ten on stone tablets from God. Although we’re 3,500 years removed from Mt. Sinai, what God gave to Moses is still important for us. The 10 Commandments were intended for all people of all time.

There’s a story about Notre Dame’s legendary football coach, Knute Rockne. It seems that a sportswriter in a South Bend, IN newspaper had earned the reputation of being the meanest and the most critical in the country. This anonymous writer knew Notre Dame well. He would write about the team’s weaknesses. He would point out who made the mistakes, who was lazy, who broke training rules. His sports column made the players angry. The truth hurt and the players complained to their coach. Rockne was sympathetic, but said he couldn’t stop the writer. He did have a suggestion. Go out each week and prove the writer wrong by playing well and winning the game.

Years later, the identity of the anonymous writer was uncovered. It was Knute Rockne himself. As the coach of the team, he knew their weaknesses. The critical column was part of his clever plan to develop better players and therefore a better team.

God’s Word also points out who makes mistakes, who is lazy, who breaks training rules in a way so personal it hurts. God tells us the truth - no matter how much it hurts - because he loves us and wants us to see our sins so we can also see our need for a Savior. Today God does that as we study his Commandments – The Big Ten.

Do you recall from your study of the 10 Commandments in a Confirmation Class, or a Starting Point Class the 3 uses of God’s LAW? The Commandments serve as: ***a curb, a mirror and a guide.***

- The ***curb*** keeps evil somewhat contained in a wicked world. Just like a curb or guard rail keeps most cars on the road.

- The **mirror** gives us a true reflection of how sinful our heart really is. It also points to our need for a Savior. The **curb** and the **mirror** are intended for both believers and unbelievers.
- The **guide** is intended only for the believer who knows Jesus by faith and wants direction or a guideline in expressing gratitude to the Savior.

For a few minutes, let's stand near Mt. Sinai and listen as God's speaks as someone who cares deeply: **"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."** The name he uses here – "LORD" (*all caps*) means the God of free and faithful love. The Savior-God who loves you is sending you The Big Ten!

We're only going to stare into the mirror of the first 3 of the 10 love for God, his Name and his Day and Word.

The First Commandment - You shall have no other gods. The Lord doesn't tolerate it when he isn't in the driver's seat of our heart. During Israel's time, they were confronted with 100's of false gods and idols made of wood, stone and precious metals.

What is that staring back at us? It's our sinful refection in the mirror of God's LAW. Painfully, we have to admit we haven't come close to loving the Lord with every bit of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

In our time and in our land, there are no idols of wood or stone, competing for our love and devotion. But there are homes built with wood and stone that have replaced the Lord in our lives. The gold and silver that surrounds us may not be shaped like an idol, but they represent the material things that have stolen our hearts from God.

The Second Commandment - You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Of all the names in the world, God's name is unique. It's the only one that means salvation and brings forgiveness. That's why he insists we treat his "Name" special.

What is that staring back at us? It's our sinful refection in the mirror of God's LAW. Painfully, we must confess we haven't come close to reserving his "Name" for worship and calling upon him in every trouble and giving him thanks. Sometimes,

we've used his name thoughtlessly. Other times, we've carelessly used it to swear and sadly, we've even used the only name that means salvation to curse people or things.

The Third Commandment - Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Although our Savior has completely satisfied all the OT regulations regarding the Sabbath, we are still required to cheerfully hear and learn God's Word and faithfully worship him.

What is that staring back at us? It's our sinful refection in the mirror of God's LAW. Again, we haven't come close to loving God's Word and eagerly studying it and plugging it into our daily lives. Instead, we've either ignored it, or treated it as insignificant. Nor have we come close to loving God's Day. Gathering for worship, or watching at home has become a bother or inconvenient, or both.

Through the sights and sounds on Mt. Sinai God wanted us to see he was serious in giving us his Commandments. He's also deadly serious about us keeping them perfectly.

Through the dark cloud on Mt. Sinai, we could still clearly see our sinful refection in the mirror of God's holy Law. As painful as that truth is, there is a silver lining, a blessing. The Commandments have also convinced us that we need a Savior.

Once the Law has done that, it's the Gospel's turn to take over. Only the Gospel can lead us to our Savior and benefit from what he's done.

- Only Jesus kept God's Law to the level of perfection required. By faith in Jesus, we've obeyed all the Commandments perfectly.
- Only Jesus covered up all the imperfections we've made. By faith in Jesus, we're declared not guilty of all our sins against all the Commandments.

So the next time you hear the term "The Big Ten," I know you'll probably still think about the athletic conference of our favorite teams. But also try to remember God's Big Ten, the Ten Commandments – the framework for your life!