**Ten Commandments and Ten Fingers**  
Notes for a Sermon for Children of All Ages

The Ten Commandments are important as guides for faithful daily living, yet many people cannot remember all ten when asked. Here is a way that children as well as adults can learn the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), using their ten fingers. The points made can be adapted to the age of the listeners-- from children to adults.

**Start with your hands together in prayer.** This reminds us that God heard the prayers of the Hebrew people when they were in slavery in Egypt and freed them (Exodus 3:7, 20:2). The commandments are a way for us to show our gratitude for God’s love in our lives and to further just and peaceful relationships in God’s world.

1. “I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods before me.” Hold up one index finger for the number one. We worship one God.

2. “You shall not worship idols.” Idols, false gods, are not only things like statues, but anything in which we place our ultimate trust and allegiance-- for example, money, possessions or weapons. Hold up two fingers. Should we worship more than one God? No, two is too many! One of them must be an idol, and we should not worship it!

3. “You shall not take the Lord’s name in vain.” Use three fingers to form the letter “W” which stands for “words.” Watch your words! God wants us to use his name in loving, caring ways, as we pray and as we talk about him, not in swearing or in anger.

4. “Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.” Hold up four fingers, and fold your thumb under to let it rest. The thumb has the right idea. It’s the Sabbath, and the thumb is following the commandment to take a day of rest. God does not want anyone to overwork or be stressed, so we need a day to rest, to be at peace, and to worship with others. God also gave us the Sabbath so that working people would not be taken advantage of by their employers (Deut. 5:14)

5. “Honor your father and your mother.” Hold up all five fingers on one hand as if you are taking a pledge, to honor your parents. God wants there to be peace and love in all our family relationships.

6. “You shall not kill.” Pretend the index finger on your second hand is a gun, shooting at the first five fingers. God’s sixth commandment teaches us not to do anything that would hurt another person unfairly.

7. “You shall not commit adultery.” Hold one hand out flat. The five fingers and hand becomes the floor of the church. Two fingers on the other hand are the man and woman to be married, standing in the church, making promises to each other. This seventh commandment calls for couples to keep the marriage promises they make.

8. “You shall not steal.” Hold up four fingers on each hand, for the eighth commandment. If you stretch out your fingers slightly, these become the prison bars, which hold someone who has been arrested for stealing. Our Presbyterian Church (USA)’s Study Catechism says “God forbids all theft and robbery, including schemes, tricks or systems that unjustly take what belongs to someone else.” (Question # 112)

9. “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” Hold up all five fingers on one hand and four on the other. Fold your second thumb under and turn your hand around, so the thumb is hiding. It is secretly going around telling the other four fingers on that hand lies and rumors about the five fingers on the other hand. It is “bearing false witness,” as it talks behind people’s backs, spreading gossip, criticizing others without talking directly to the people involved. Again, our Study Catechism teaches us “Negative stereotyping is a form of falsehood that invites actions of humiliation, abuse, and violence as forbidden by the commandment against murder.” (Question # 115)

10. “Do not covet what belongs to your neighbor.” Hold out your hands, palms up, and wiggle all ten fingers to show that they’ve got the “gimmies.” Your fingers are saying, “Gimmie what belongs to my neighbor. I want all those things my neighbor has.” This is not the way God wants us to live.

Together may we remember the Ten Commandments’ teachings in the light of Jesus’ teaching— that the love of God and neighbor are the two greatest commandments (Mark 12:28-34). John Calvin encouraged Christians in his day to sing the Ten Commandments followed by “Lord, have mercy” after each commandment. **End with your hands together in prayer,** asking that, by God’s grace, we may live out these teachings in our everyday lives and expressing thanks that the God of peace is with us all (Philippians 4:9).

This resource was prepared by Bruce & Carolyn Gillette (co-pastors of Limestone Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, DE) for the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program’s packet for World Communion Sunday 2002. This educational resource for remembering the Ten Commandments was adapted with permission from the March 26, 2000 issue of *Homiletic*, it was originally shared by David Sauer. Questions 89-119 in the Presbyterian Church (USA)’s Study Catechism are on the Ten Commandments and their meaning for us today:  
*A Christian Primer: The Prayer, the Creed, the Commandments* by Albert Curry Winn is an excellent resource for personal study (in our Limestone Church library).