

**Introduction**  
**“Thou shalt”**  
**“Thou shall not”**

These sturdy words from the King James Version of the Bible may seem demanding, even joyless. But what if we considered these words anew? In this study, Eugenia Gamble invites readers to consider the Ten Commandments (or Ten Words) as an invitation from a loving God who wants the best from and for us, individually and as a community. “The Ten Words are an invitation into a passionate life with God and with each other . . . Each of the Ten Words offers a salve, a healing balm, for a core wound in human experience. They provide boundaries within which we can live in freedom and peace” (from the introduction)



**The Basic Questions to Hold in Your Hearts:** How do we live out our relationship with God and with one another in a world that is often ruled by other standards? What is the pain from which God seeks to protect us in the Ten Words? How can a fresh embrace of these Words contribute to the restoration of ourselves, our communities, and the furthering of the gospel in the world?

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**LOVE CARVED IN STONE**  
**A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments**

(based on Exodus 20:1–17 (NRSV); Deuteronomy 5:1–21 (NRSV))

**About the Author—The Rev. Eugenia A. Gamble**

Eugenia is a PC(USA) pastor who has served the church for more than 30 years. Her first call was to Presbyterian Women as the staff associate for women’s leadership development for the General Assembly Mission Council. She served pastorates in Alabama, Colorado, and California, and the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley as associate executive presbyter. She is an author, speaker, preacher, and retreat leader who loves nothing more than helping the Bible come alive in people’s lives.

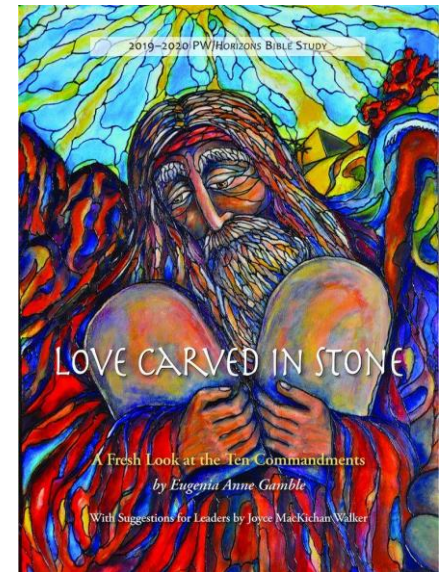
Eugenia is married to Rob Phillips; they live on the central coast of California with their beloved Keeshond, Abigail. Eugenia joined her first PW circle in seminary and says she would not have been able to negotiate life without her PW sisters.

**Eugenia on *Love Carved in Stone***

**Nowhere in the Hebrew text does the word for “commandment” appear. In the Bible, these utterances are called just what they are: Words!**

Words! Words! We are accustomed to speaking of Jesus as the Word, or the Bible itself as God’s Word, but we may never have thought of the Ten Commandments in that way. I’ve chosen to retain the term *Ten Words* because it is the biblical form and can help open us up to looking at the Ten Commandments in fresh ways

**Staying in the Hebrew Scriptures and Moving into the New Testament:** Each lesson begins with an exploration of the Ten Words in their biblical contexts. From there, we consider a moment from Jesus’ life that shows us how he lived out those Words. We then consider the Words for our own lives and contexts. We conclude with an invitation to pray with the Words in our circles or study groups and in our personal devotions.



**PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN  
POWERFUL KNOWLEDGE TO  
EMPOWER WOMEN  
2019-2020 PW HORIZONS**

**BIBLE STUDY**

**“LOVE CARVED IN STONE”**

**‘GOD’S LOVE LETTER TO  
HIS BELOVED COMMUNITY’**

***Bible study is central to a life of faith.  
Love Carved in Stone  
is a study  
that may truly reframe  
the way you look at and live in the world.***

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### **Lesson One, “Words of Love: I Am Your God; You Shall Have No Others.”**

**Purpose:** Keeping God central in our hearts and minds is a loving response to our loving God. God calls us into deep relationship with God, which requires our fidelity. The second of the ten Words asks us—for our sake—to extinguish our desire to grasp or contain God

**Food for Thought:** Putting God first is easy when the choice is between God and something we don’t like or care about. It is hard when putting God first comes into conflict with our other loves.” What are your “other loves”? How does keeping God first in your life ultimately bring joy to you? How about your “other loves”?

**Notable quote from *Love Carved in Stone*:**“The Words remind us that the life of God’s people is always relational, always communal, always with and for others. God’s outreach to us with the boundaries we need to live lives of joy and promise is not quaint and of another age. The Words are eternal. This is who God is and what God desires.”

### **Lesson Two, “Words of Love: Don’t Trivialize My Name.”**

**Purpose:** To understand the power of God’s Name and call to use it rightly.

**Food for Thought:** “Our ancestors believed that to know a person’s name made that person in some ways vulnerable to another. To give one’s name was to say, ‘I share all of who I am with you. I trust that you will not hurt me, because now I know that you can.’ To be invited to speak God’s Name (or to refrain from doing so) reflects God’s trusting desire that we understand God’s nature and power in certain ways. To speak a name is to activate the power of that name. To speak God’s Name draws us up into a deep intimacy that is sacred. When we do that, we are speaking for and as God in much the same way that an ambassador speaks for and as the country represented.” (from lesson two) To be in intimate and respectful relationship with God requires discernment and care. Consider ways that God’s Name could be attached to things that are contrary to God’s values or that are of personal preference.

**Notable quote from *Love Carved in Stone*:** “When we learn to reverence our relationship with God and keep God’s Name holy, we often find a deep calming of our anxieties, along with a wider vision of issues about which we have made erroneous or incomplete assumptions. Once we understand the Third Word, it becomes more humbling and more powerful to claim that we act in God’s Name in our homes and communities.”

### **Lesson Three, “Words of Love: Keep Sabbath.”**

**Purpose:** To understand the gift of Sabbath and to recover a sense of the sacred urgency of Sabbath-keeping for human life and the created order.

**Food for Thought:**“Sabbath is that one day each week when we stop long enough for beauty to break through, for our sublime dependence upon God to enter our busyness and remind us to whom we belong. It is a day for special foods, for special prayers, for family and friends. It is a day for welcoming our vulnerability and letting go of the illusion that it is by our work that the planets stay in their courses. It is a day for recognizing how the sacred surrounds us and how God makes something holy of us together (from lesson three).” What would need to change in your life for you to experience Sabbath in this biblical sense? What would need to change for your family? Your church? Your community?

**Notable quote from *Love Carved in Stone*:** “Sabbath, ‘to stop’ or ‘to cease,’ is a part of the fabric of creation. It is not recreation or even rest as we think of it today, but rather, a radical, weekly practice of the reorganization of life and priorities toward God and in the presence of God.

### **Lesson Four, “Words of Love: Honor the Life-givers.”**

**Purpose:** To explore the gift of life and our responsibility to those who bring us to life.

**Food for Thought:** “The meaning of the Fifth Word is not as simple as obeying our parents. It is bigger than that. . . . The Fifth Word is about how we honor life and all of the people who bring and nurture life in us (from lesson four).” What is one example of wisdom you learned from parents, grandparents, or other elders

that has impacted your life? What one thing above others would you hope that children in your life learn(ed) from you?

**Notable quote from *Love Carved in Stone*:** “Giving a place of precedence and priority to those who bring us to life means that we do not give a place of precedence to those who damage us or diminish us, who sap our emotional strength. . . . [T]his Word is about life, and God uses many people to bless us with full lives. If we don’t give priority to the ones who nurture life in us, then the blessing attached to this Command can be forfeited.”

### **Lesson Five, “Words of Love: Don’t Kill Each Other.”**

**Purpose:** To understand the many faces of murder and how the beloved community is to honor life by refusing any and all death-dealing behaviors.

**Food for Thought:** “At the heart of this Word is a deep respect for creation. Murder is seen as the unraveling of creation and is prohibited in the beloved community. This prohibition refers to destroying anything that one does not have the power to create or restore. It includes destruction that takes place quickly in anger as well as destruction that takes place slowly over time, small choice by small choice. The rabbis talk of this anti-creation choice as robbing God (page 61).” What choices or actions do you see as “murderous” in our day? What consequences do you see for the community at large resulting from these actions (page 63)?

**Notable quote from *Love Carved in Stone*:** “Whether murder is physical, psychological, or spiritual, it is the same violation. Jesus urges his listeners [in the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5:21–26] to examine and come to terms with rage in ways that do not defile others. Failing to do so can result in death to relationships and our own moral compass (page 63).”

