

2018 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women
Eugenia Gamble
August 3, 2018 Morning Plenary

“Then God spoke these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.”

—Exodus 20:1

I want to tell y’all a story.

About 15 years ago, I fell in love all over again with the great love of my life, one that I had loved as long as I could remember with all the ups and downs of life long love. All the confusions and glories, the irritations and disappointments, the ecstasies and surprises, the times of closeness and times of distance.

And it happened, this renewed falling, when I stumbled upon an old love letter. A love letter the first line of which I just read to you from the Book of Exodus. A love letter so filled with passion and self giving and revelation and compassion and caution and understanding that it, to this day, takes my breath away. That love letter we commonly call the Ten Commandments and that great love is of course, our God.

My deep journey into the Ten Commandments started in a tiny cabin on the southern coast of Nova Scotia. This is a story I tell in the study and will tell in my workshop as well. And it is a journey, that with many others, has led to the 2019–2020 *Horizons* Bible Study, *Love Carved in Stone: a Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments*.

Now, I didn’t initially recognize the words I began to pour over as the love letter that I have come to believe they are. When I first began to study these words intensely, I thought of them as a wise list of to dos and to don’ts that were basically given to us to help us know who we were and how we were to behave as God’s people. That is of course true. But I think that is just the tip of the iceberg.

I think that when God spoke these Words to us from the Holy Mountain, God was not just telling us what to do but was speaking a new relationship into being, speaking a new kind of community into being. A community shaped and formed by God’s nature and values, which are of course Love.

Early in my journey read a marvelous commentary edited by a contemporary Jewish rabbi named Rachel Mikvah. In her comments on the first Word (commandment) she noted how lovely, soft and breathless the language of the text is, that to even speak the words is a kind of ecstasy. I read the text again with that in mind.

And I saw in this first Word, God saying to us, much like a suitor in generations past, I am yours. I am Your God.

About two years after that starting point in Nova Scotia, I had moved to California and, against all odds to the contrary, met the man who is now my husband of 11 years. When Robbie and I first met, I was not, what you might call, open to a commitment. I had made painful relationship choices more than once and I was still reeling from a painful divorce a few years before. I was done. But he sure was cute.

At any rate, Robbie was ready to get married and he had asked me several times. Each time, I metaphorically ran screaming, like McCaully Culkin in *Home Alone*. One day we were sitting together in the beautiful California sunshine, on a bench on a cliff by the ocean and Robbie asked me again. I was silent. Conflicted. Scared. Before I could say anything, he took my face in his hands and said, "I'm not that other guy. I am your guy."

And the rest is history. Robbie is quick to say when I tell that story that I still said no that day, but I did heal and I did open up eventually. I think of that moment whenever I think of the Ten Commandments.

In those ancient holy words, I believe that God takes your face in hand, looks at you deeply and says, "I am your God. I am Yours. And I want you and I want you whole."

My prayer as we dive into this study together—after we've spent this next year basking in God's Promises with Amy [Poling Sutherland]'s study—is that you will fall in love again, that you will see yourself and God with new eyes, and that seeing will bring you new wholeness and new confidence in your and our mission as God's beloved.