

# Carved in Stone

Embracing God's Value System

## Adult Lesson One

### Bedtime Stories and Other Important Stuff

*Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, NRSV).*

**A**s we begin this trip together through the Ten Commandments, one of the first objectives will be to gain a proper understanding of how these commandments are to function in our lives. In our 21st century context, a certain legalistic understanding of truth has come to dominate our understanding of right and wrong. "If the law says it's wrong, it's wrong, but if you can get around it, well, all the better." This is completely foreign to the ancient Hebrew understanding employed in the Ten Commandments.



These commandments, like the stories of the exodus and the wilderness wondering, were what defined the Hebrews as a people. They answered the deep questions of identity: Who are we? and What type of people are we suppose to be in this world? They found the answer to these questions in these stories. They were a people loved by God, rescued from slavery by God, and dependant upon God for everything they had. What type of people were they to be? They were to be a people who revered their parents, loved their neighbors enough not to sleep with their neighbor's spouse, steal their neighbor's land, or lie about their neighbor in court. And why were they to live this way? Because they loved and served the God who rescued them. The deliverance of these people from bondage accurately reflected the type of God He was.

#### OBJECTIVES

- Determine the stories that shape our modern situation.
- Understand the importance of stories and words in determining right and wrong.
- Commit to telling our stories to our children.
- Decide to allow the Ten Commandments to shape us.

#### SCRIPTURE

- Deuteronomy 6:20-24
- Deuteronomy 6:1-12

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of Handout #1.1 for everyone in the class
- One copy of Handout #1.2
- Copies of Handout #1.3 for everyone in the class
- Chalk/chalkboard; marker/dry erase board; or something else to write on
- Pencils/pens

## Part 1 - Make me, mold me

Distribute copies of Handout #1.1 to every person in your class. You may wish to give them an example such as "Rocky—to teach my children the importance of perseverance and self-discipline." Give them five minutes or so to come up with their answers. When the majority of people have finished writing, begin to make a list of their answers on the chalkboard in two columns, one for books or films, the other for their reasons. Say, **We are making a list of the stories that shape us and we hope will shape our children.** Ask for volunteers to explain what they chose and why they chose them. After you have finished, say, **The stories a religion or society chooses to tell its children are very important. If done correctly, they are the primary way a society molds and teaches a child about the kind of person he/ she is to be. In our society we often use books or films to portray these stories for our kids, but in ancient Israel, they told the stories out loud and carried symbols with them to help remind them of where they had come from.**

For the next three months we will examine the Ten Commandments along with the story of the Jewish people. Today we will peer through a window into that world in order to see exactly how the commandments functioned for them.

## Part 2 - "I cannot tell a lie..."

Explain **About fifteen or twenty years ago, there was an explosion of work on our country's forefathers, such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, that shot holes in the saintly vision most people had of them. Many were womanizers who drank excessively. They were far from exemplary. This truth upset many people who were raised with the stories such as young George and the cherry tree. Come to find out, he could tell a lie after all.** Ask **Do you remember when these stories came out?** Allow a few moments for an answer, then ask **Why do you think people were so upset by these?** (Because much of their identity as Americans, that is to say, what it means to be an ideal American citizen, was formed by these stories. It wasn't so important the George didn't chop down a cherry tree. The story stood for what it meant to be an American. People feared our ideals were eroding.)

Explain **In a similar way, the stories of the Exodus and the giving of the Ten Commandments defined for the people of Israel who they were. When a young George Washington says "I cannot tell a lie," it means a great deal more to children than just, "If I cut down a tree, and someone asks me about it, I have to tell the truth." It means, "As an American, I am to be honest in all that I do, just like the 'Father of our Country' was honest." In the exact same way, when an Israelite heard, "You shall have no other gods before me," it meant more than, "Don't worship other gods." It meant, "The LORD is to be the most important thing in my life at all times. Never will I let anything interfere with my devotion to the LORD." These commandments were not laws to get around, they were statements to shape a community.**

Have someone read Deuteronomy 6:20-25. Ask these questions. **To whom and when**

**are you to tell these things, according to the passage?** (To your children, when they ask you, "What is the meaning of these laws?") **What are you to tell them?** (God took us out of Egypt and did mighty deeds for us. He gave us the promised land. In return, he gave us rules, these commandments, so we would prosper.) Say **Basically, God is telling the people to tell their children the stories of what he has done for them, so that they will be willing to follow the commandments. Ask Do you think that we, as a church, are doing a good job of telling to our children the stories of what God has done for us? If the answer is no, should we be surprised so many of our teens are ignoring the commands of the Bible?**

### Part 3 - Bedtime stories

Before the class session give Handout #1.2 to someone to read. Ask for the handout to be read now. Ask **When has God done "mighty deeds" for you?** (Allow a time for your class to answer this question. They don't have to be physical miracles. They can be things like comfort after the death of a loved one, or the greatest miracle, salvation.) Then ask, Those of you with children, have you told these stories to them? Tell us about an occasion.

### Part #4 - Are you with me?

Explain **It is good that we tell our children our stories and teach them the commandments, but this class isn't for our children. Our purpose is to re-examine the Ten Commandments and to see if we have allowed them to shape us.**

Have someone read Deuteronomy 6:1-9. Ask **According to these verses, who is suppose to keep the commandments?** (The adults, the children, and the children's children.) Where are we to keep these words? (In our hearts.) **How are we to memorize these commandments?** (We are to recite them when we are at home, before going to bed, and when we get up. We are to carry them with us at all times.)

Explain **God knew if we didn't know the commandments, if we didn't make them a regular part of our lives, we would never be able to follow them.** Distribute Handout #1.3. Give about 5 minutes for class members to work, then ask, **How many of you were able to get all ten?** (Very few people may be able to get all ten, and most probably will only get five or so.) Then say, **This is part of what we will be doing in this class. We will try to make the Ten Commandments a major part of how we see ourselves and define the kind of people we are to be. If we are going to do this, though, we have to be open to the commandments, and allow them to shape us.** Challenge the class by saying **I am going to do my best to listen to these Ten Commandments during the next 12 weeks and let them form the kind of person I am. Ask, Will you choose to change everything in violation of these commands?** This is a tough challenge, but it gives the class a time to commit to this study. This will move them from listeners to actual participants.

**Close in prayer.**



## Stories That Shape

If you and your family were shipwrecked on an island and could choose just three movies (apparently with a TV, a VCR or DVD player, and a generator), books, or stories to share with your children, what three would you choose and why?

<u>Movie, book, or story</u>	<u>Reason selected</u>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.



## No Gas, No Problem

This is a true story my parents told me (Jason, the writer of this curriculum). My father was in the military, stateside, during the Vietnam War. Because he was married with an 18-month-old daughter, he and my mother were unable to live on the barracks. Money was very tight, and, in a day without credit cards, sudden expenses could wreak havoc on their lives. My sister became sick and it was the end of the pay cycle. The medication had drained the last of their cash. They were truly broke. With one week before payday, the Plymouth was below empty with no hope of filling it up. But my father had to get to work, and doctor's appointments couldn't be missed. Sick with worry and after much prayer, finally my father said, "Well, we'll just drive her 'til she stops. I don't know what else we can do." So that's what they did. For one week that car ran without gas. They didn't take excursions to the mountains or the beach, but they got where they needed to go.

I've clung to this story many times. When my faith was shot and I couldn't think of a reason to believe, my parents had provided one. I got through. My parents had faithfully obeyed the teaching of Moses given some 3400 years before by telling me stories of their journey of faith. I keep the commands of God, in part, because I've been told the stories.



## Write the Ten Commandments

See if you can write out the Ten Commandments. Don't worry about writing them word for word or in biblical order, just see how many you can get "close" on.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

