

Carved in Stone

Embracing God's Value System

Teen Lesson One

Passing the Baton

SCRIPTURE

- Deuteronomy 6:1-8
- Hebrews 11:8-12; 12:1-3
- Exodus 20:1-17

WHAT YOU NEED

- Bibles
- Paper
- Pencils or pens
- Letter envelopes
- "Saints" to talk about God's faithfulness, in person or on video
- A copy of Handouts #1.1 and #1.2 for each student.



PURPOSE

To Know: These next few weeks will be given to examine what it means to be the people of God in the world. Biblical commandments are an effort to align the identity and lifestyle of people with the life of God. We are called to live within this world but not be "of it." This means that in many ways we are bilingual, yet single in focus. We understand the language of society and are deeply engaged in its structures, but maintain our distinctiveness in the way we live life.

To Value: Only as we turn our eyes away from the people around us and pursue the kingdom of God in every aspect of life can we faithfully respond to the call of God to follow him.

To Apply: Recognize that God wants to use your life in the same way he used Abraham, Moses, and Ruth. Are you willing to leave your securities and comfort zone to follow God?

WHAT'S GOING ON?

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews serves a very pivotal and transitional purpose for the writer. Up to this point the writer has talked about the new covenant that Jesus instituted through his life and death and how people can find salvation through this new covenant. Jesus is the new "high priest" who understands our affliction and has made a way for "new life."

In chapter 11 the writer offers a brief overview of the people's story. In 39 verses the people are reminded of the way God worked through faithful men and women throughout the course of history. The writer takes readers on a walk down memory lane. The term "by faith..." is repeated over and over, creating a litany of heroes who responded to the call of God to let go of their personal and temporal goals for the sake of God's plan.

The purpose of Hebrews 11, though, is not to provide a history lesson. This is a motivational speech. The reason for chapter 11 can be found in the first few verses of chapter 12.

The writer wants to show the readers that the same God who was with Abraham in the past will be with them in the present. The same God who separated the seas for Moses will separate the seas facing the people tomorrow. The question remains, however, Will the people respond like those who came before? Will the people live by faith? The purpose of reminding the people of Abraham, Sampson, Jephthah and all of the others is to offer encouragement that the story of God continues today! God is still at work in the lives of faithful people. The story isn't finished! He works through people who will abandon the dreams they have set for themselves to "pursue a foreign city whose architect and builder is God." In other words, the author is writing about people who will live by faith and not by sight.

The 12th chapter of Hebrews is a continuation of the 11th. Here we are asked directly, Will you live by faith? Will you respond like those mentioned in chapter 11? Those who have come before us are to give us courage to take the baton and continue the race.

WHAT'S IT MEAN?

What does this have to do with the Ten Commandments? The Ten Commandments are concerned with more than just behavior. Often people see the Ten Commandments as a legal code given to the people by God. These commandments go much deeper than stone tablets and human actions. While the commandments have significant external ramifications for the Israelite people, they do not begin with the externals. They are an effort to realign the people's identity to that of God. This is why the Commandments begin with the reminder "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt." The people's lives are to tell the story of God. God will be known throughout the world through the lives of his people and they must reflect his holiness and distinctness.

The 11th chapter of Hebrews tells the story of how God has been working in the world. The 12th chapter invites the readers to join this story. The Ten Commandments are prefaced with the reminder "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt," an often mentioned work of God in biblical history. This provides the motivation and basis for the people's ethic. In the same way, Hebrews 11 reminds the people one more time who God is and what he has done. The writer then invites the people to purify their lives so that their lives could tell the story of God. Intrinsically linked to how we live is learning who God is. Our view of God dramatically shapes how we understand life. This is why it is essential to tell the story of God. Before the writer of Hebrews tells the people to throw off sin, he reminds them why!

The Image of God. Throughout the Old Testament there is the insistence that the people must not construct images of God. This will be covered in depth when we look at the second commandment. For our purposes here, however, it is important to note the rationale for such an insistence. In the creation story in Genesis, humanity is created in the image of God. They were formed in his likeness and thus would mirror his image in the world. Nothing else could serve such a purpose. Humanity was created uniquely and no other created object could represent God like they could.

Even though humanity has been formed and shaped in the image of God, sin can interfere with this image. The Ten Commandments can realign people to their intended purpose as the hallmark of God's creation. There is something about the prohibitions of murder, adultery, stealing, and coveting that teaches us about the character of God. As we grow and learn more about this God who created us and calls us to relationship, we learn what it means to be human. People were designed to live in relationship with God and to reflect his image in the world. In learning the Ten Commandments we are not just learning how God wants his people to live but also are gaining a window into who God is. God is a supremely sovereign God who values human life and engages in human affairs.

Interactive Lesson Guide

GETTIN' GOIN'

Telephone Relay. To introduce the relationship between Hebrews 11 and 12 you may begin by illustrating the lesson through a telephone relay. This relay may need to be adapted depending on the number of students and size of room. Give a specific command to the first student for the last person to implement (e.g., write out your name backwards on the black-board). The first student will share the command with the next student who will continue to pass the command along. To make the exercise a little more difficult you may want to separate the students around the room and put a time limit on the relay. This relay will continue until it reaches the last person, who will then act out the command given. It is typical for the command to be altered by the time it is finally executed. In fact, it is not uncommon for the last person to hear a command that is drastically different from the initial command. Regardless of whether the command was executed properly, the relay serves as a good illustration of the relay process and can be referred to throughout the lesson.

Transition from the relay to the lesson by asking a series of questions to get the students thinking about how the Christian faith is passed from generation to generation. It has been said that God has no grandchildren. This means that the faith must be taught from one generation to the next or it is in danger of being disregarded or misunderstood. Such an emphasis on passing the baton is vital for understanding the Ten Commandments.

Along with learning how to live is learning who you are. Students will never understand why these commands are important unless they are first taught who God is and what it means to be his people. Here are a few helpful questions to get the students thinking about the application of this exercise: **Have you seen a 400-meter relay race (Olympics, etc.)? What is the most crucial and yet difficult part of the relay? Why is the handoff the most difficult?** If the Telephone Relay broke down, you might use it as an illustration of what happens when the handoff doesn't go well.

Ask **In what ways is the Christian life like a relay race? How is the Christian faith passed from one runner to the next? How do we learn about who God is and how he wants us to live?**

DIG IT

Have the teens turn to Deuteronomy 6:1-8 and ask someone to read it. Ask **Why do you think the Israelites were instructed to "bind this on your doorposts?"** When the people arrived in the promised land they were instructed to tell their stories to their children. Their story as a community of faith began with God's promise and centered on God's continual presence and mighty acts of redemption. To remind themselves of where they came from and what shaped their identity, the people established symbols and practices that rehearsed and represented the historic events. When they passed through the Jordan River, a pile of stones was established to serve as a reminder of God's miraculous redemption. When the children asked "Why are these stones here?" the parents were to respond with the story of their walk with God-"We were once a people in exile but God miraculously brought us out."

Say **Deuteronomy 6:1 begins with "These are the commands, decrees and laws**

the Lord your God directed me to teach you." Why would God give us commandments? What do the commandments tell us about God? God cares for his people, is present in their lives, will provide for their needs, desires a unique and unqualified relationship with his people, etc.

Distribute Handout #1.1, God's Top 10 List, and pencils or pens. Ask the students to write as many of the Ten Commandments as they can remember. Ask **Is it important to know these commandments? Why?** Have the teens turn to Exodus 20 to compare their lists with the scripture. Ask **How do the commandments begin? What is the phrase that precedes the first commandment? Why is this important?** This statement ("I am the Lord your God") reminded them of who they were as God's people and that the Commandments were given to keep them close to God. You might use some of the material from the image of God discussion printed above.

How do we understand the Commandments today? You may hear something about "dumb rules." **Why is this?** The Israelites didn't view the commandments as legalism. They saw the commandments as an effort to make all of life holy. These commandments expressed faith that God was present in even the most mundane human tasks and areas of life.

Ask someone to read Hebrews 11:8-12. Say **Abraham was a man of faith. When God gave him a command, Abraham obeyed the Lord. Because of his obedience, God blessed Abraham and all of God's promises were fulfilled.**

Ask **Who do you know who has walked faithfully with the Lord?** Allow the teens to describe people they know who have been faithful disciples. **How has God blessed the people who were faithful?** You might ask a "saint" of the church to come to your class and tell stories about God's faithfulness. Or maybe you could help two or three teens make a video of interviews with several members of the church. Ask a World War II vet or a cancer survivor or a widow to describe God's faithfulness in their lives.

Challenge the students to learn and study "the story." Say **It is important to read the stories of the ways God has worked in the past. As we read of God's faithfulness to Abraham, for example, we find faith to trust God in the present and future. When we hear stories from our own time, it becomes that much more real to us.**

TAKE OUT

Distribute a piece of writing paper and an envelope to each student. Or, if your congregation uses an encouragement or "I Care" card, you may use that. Ask the teens to write a short note of thanks to someone whose life has been an example of faithfulness. Tell the teens that if they will address the envelopes, you will stamp and mail them this week. Otherwise, the teens could take the envelopes with them to mail.

Ask someone to read Hebrews 12:1-3. Say **Now it's our turn to be faithful. We need to get rid of the weight of sin that slows us down. The Ten Commandments will help us identify sin. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus and run hard in the race of faith. We have been handed the baton of faith. Our task is to be faithful and someday to pass the baton to another generation.**

Distribute Handout #1.2, Pay It Forward. You may also want to write the following statement on the chalk- or whiteboard. "I have received _____ from _____. I will pay it forward by _____ to/for _____." Invite several teens to tell how they filled in the blanks.

Close with a prayer of commitment to be faithful with what we have received and to pass it on to others.

God's Top 10 List

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 close you can get.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.



Pay It Forward

Fill in the blanks in the following sentences, then think of a time you can activate your plan.

I have received _____ from

_____.

I will pay it forward by _____ to/for

_____.

Name a time this week when you will do it.

