

# Carved in Stone

Embracing God's Value System

## Teen Lesson Two

# Is This Really Relevant?

### SCRIPTURE

- Matthew 5: 17-20

### WHAT YOU NEED

- Bibles
- A copy of Handout #2.1 for each student
- Three copies of the drama, Handout #2.2
- Pens or Pencils
- Candy Bar or other small prize



### PURPOSE

**To know:** These commandments are very applicable to present day life. They paint a picture of what God wants for his people. People are to live in right relationship with God, which will lead to right relationships with people. The vertical (relationship with God) is strongly connected to the horizontal (relationships with people).

**To value:** We can only live a life pleasing to God when our hearts are truly devoted him. When God has all of our hearts and minds, our lives will begin to conform to that of God's. Our motivation will move from trying to appease God to desiring a closer a relationship with him.

**To apply:** Allow these next few weeks to be a time of self-examination and prayer. Is your life in conformity to that set forth in the commandments? Is God glorified by your relationship and behavior when no one is looking? The commandments give us a blue print of how humans are to live. What does your life say about God?

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

The teachings of Jesus were very different than those of the rabbis working within the synagogue. Whereas the rabbis stressed outer conformity to the law, Jesus argued that the inner life produced the outer life. He stressed the inner qualities of the heart and mind and wanted to judge motivation rather than rest solely on action. The people didn't understand how to process Jesus' teachings. Was he trying to get rid of Torah and write a new law? What was wrong with the law?

Jesus' response was that there was nothing wrong with the law except the way the people responded to it. The people had everything boiled down to certain practices, laws, and symbols. Their relationships with God were nothing more than part of their schedules. They thought that as long as you participated in "church" and went through "the motions," you would have nothing to worry about. This is what Jesus rejected. He preached that God cared about our lives and wanted the whole package. It wasn't enough to merely go through the motions.

The commandments were never about legalism. Their purpose was not just to organize and limit people's behavior. God had a plan and desire for how people were to live. Their lives were not their own; they were created by God. Freedom was not in lawlessness but in living according to God's plan. But God has never just desired human's offerings and appropriate conduct. He has always sought out right relationships with people. The commandments show us God's plan. Today, 3300 years later, these commandments are still applicable because God still cares how we live. He still wants us to live in right relationship with him and our neighbors.

## Interactive Lesson Guide

### GETTIN' GOIN'

Say **Brennan Manning once said in a sermon, "The greatest cause of atheism in the world today is Christians ... who acknowledge Jesus with their lips then walk out the door and deny him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable."** Ask **Do you think this is a true statement? If so, why do you think the behavior of Christians is so influential?**

Distribute Handout #2.1, Phony Baloney or The Real Deal?, and pens or pencils. In groups of two or three, ask the students to write in the left column ways in which they have witnessed hypocritical behavior in Christians. (You will complete the right column later in the class session.) Allow only two or three minutes for this exercise. Once the students have finished the exercise discuss the answers given.

This opening exercise is to get the students thinking about the problems of failing to practice what one preaches. In discussing the ways students have witnessed hypocritical behavior, it is important to focus on two major aspects: What is hypocrisy and what are its causes? The dominant characteristic of hypocrisy is insincerity. The word actually comes from the Greek word meaning "to act." Think of a performer acting out a drama. Hypocrisy is a person acting out a part that is different from who they are in reality.

Tell the following story. **Two teens, Jeff and Christy, cheated on a geometry test and lied to their teacher when asked about it. Both of the teens are Christians and attend the same youth group. A few days later Christy started feeling guilty and decided she was going to tell the teacher the truth. When she told Jeff about her intentions he said that he cheats all the time and has never been caught. "As long as you don't get caught, no one is hurt. What difference does it matter anyway? There is nothing wrong with cheating and you would be stupid to tell on us. In fact, if you do tell the teacher, I will deny everything." Despite Jeff's insistence, Christy informed her teacher and her parents of her actions.**

Ask **Who was the hypocrite in this scenario?** (Jeff.) The purpose of this illustration is to show the "heart" of hypocrisy. Christy's actions were clearly sinful; she was wrong for cheating and lying. There was a significant difference, however, between Christy's and Jeff's responses to their actions. Christy's actions did not reflect who she was or what she believed. She realized her mistake and worked to amend the situation to resolve her hypocrisy. Jeff responded very differently to the situation. It is evident that his behavior was neither uncommon nor inconsistent with his normal actions, but incompatible with his profession as a Christian. The two main issues that make Jeff different from Christy are the habitual nature of Jeff's sin and his lack of repentance.

In this lesson we will get to the root of hypocrisy and discuss the issues of motivation and maintaining consistency between what we believe and how we live.

## DIG IT

**Have a student read Matthew 5:17-20. Say** It is evident that many people did not know how to interpret Jesus' teachings. The main question in people's minds was How does this teaching relate to the laws of the Old Testament? Is he trying to replace the laws with new laws? The Sermon on the Mount does not replace the law but rather underscores its original intention. By saying that sin includes thoughts as well as actions, Jesus emphasized that the commandments are about more than external conformity to the law.

Ask **How does Jesus reinterpret the Old Testament commands regarding murder and adultery?** Tell the students that the answer is somewhere in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-7:28). The student who provides the answer first could be given a candy bar or other small prize. After discussing Jesus' interpretation of the Old Testament commands, dialogue for a moment about Jeff and Christy in light of this Bible passage.

Ask **What is the significance of Matthew 5:17-20 for understanding the purpose of the commandments?** Read Matthew 5:20 again. Ask **What was wrong with the righteousness of the Pharisees?** It was just a matter of externals—they were *acting*. Refer back to the definition of hypocrisy. **How can our righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees? If the Pharisees were only worried about the commandments, can we be righteous and not obey them? If not, what motivates us to obey the commandments?** *We do* obey the law, but we do so because of what God has done in our lives. We are not to think that God wants us to fix our lives before we come to him, but rather we come to God as we are and allow him to change us. Conformity to the law is a natural outgrowth of being in relationship with God. This is essential! The students must understand that God works inside-out rather than outside-in. The commandments teach us about God.

Select three students to perform the drama printed at the end of this lesson. In response to the drama, ask **Do you think Jacob and Vanessa gave Joshua good advice? Did Jesus "get rid" of the Old Testament?** This drama attempts to portray a modern misconception. The God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament is the same God! God doesn't want to get rid of the Old Testament law but fulfill it. We do obey the law, but we do so because of what God has done in our lives.

Ask **Why is it important to obey the commandments?** The commandments teach us about God and what it means to be his people. Our lives are to tell the world who God is. If our lives contradict the law God has given us, it says that we are not in right relation with God. In being in relationship to God, we will naturally begin to resemble him. Just as you begin to pick up accents and funny gestures from people when you spend a lot of time with them, so the same applies to God.

## TAKE OUT

Go back to Handout #2.1, Phony Baloney or The Real Deal? Using the same groups as at the beginning of the class session, have the students transform the *phony baloney* behavior into *the real deal*. For each situation they wrote in the left column, the group members will write a proper Christian action in the right column. After a few minutes, ask the groups to share the "before" and "after" actions with the whole class.

In closing, ask each student to look at his or her worksheet and to put an "X" in the box in the right column that is something he or she will do this week. After a few moments of quiet reflection, close with a prayer of commitment.



# Drama

**Purpose:** The commandments are not about legalism. They teach us about God and encourage us to realign our lives with the life of God.

**Characters:** Joshua, Jacob, Vanessa

**Background:** Jacob and Vanessa are 13-year-old twins. Their parents have been taking them to church for several years and they both became Christians at the age of 10. Joshua attends school with Jacob and Vanessa. He is on Jacob's baseball team and has been friends with Jacob and Vanessa for several years. Joshua wasn't raised in the church and views Christianity as "boring" and filled with "hypocritical" people. The conversation happens one afternoon after school.

Joshua: I can't believe the nerve of that teacher.

Vanessa: What do you mean?

Joshua: He's always telling us "don't smoke, it's bad for your health." Yesterday, I saw him out back behind the school smoking a cigarette. I'm just tired of people telling me not to do things and then turning around and doing it.

Jacob: You saw Mr. Turner smoking?

Joshua: Yeah! Right behind the school. There's so many rules and even more hypocrites!

Jacob: Is that why you'll never come to church with us? Do you think the church is just about rules?

Joshua: Yeah, pretty much. Honestly, I just want to have some fun and not worry about all of those rules.

Vanessa: Joshua, there's more to the church than rules. Jesus died so you don't have to worry about all of that. The Old Testament is about rules but all of that changed with Jesus. People stuck on rules are stuck in the Old Testament. That stuff isn't relevant anymore.

Joshua: What do you mean? That doesn't make sense. Are you saying I can be a Christian and not obey the rules?

Jacob: You just need to pray for forgiveness and try your best.

Vanessa: God doesn't expect you to be perfect. He doesn't even care if you follow the rules. He just wants you to believe in Jesus. As long as you say the prayer "Jesus, I believe in you, please forgive me from my sins," it doesn't matter what you do after that.