

*Lousy Laws or Loving Lives?*

*A STUDY OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS*

Teen Curriculum

Written by J. Wesley Furlong



**Carved in Stone**

*Embracing God's Value System*

**CARVED IN STONE**

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## Teen Teacher Introduction

Dear Teacher,

This project has been a fun journey for me! It has opened up this portion of scripture and both challenged and renewed my walk with God.

I realize that in some ways, you have your work cut out for you. For many people the Old Testament law seems out-dated and irrelevant to our present day situation. That's where you come in. What I have discovered through experience is that a teacher can radically shape one's worldview. I am writing this curriculum because of a teacher who opened up the world of the Old Testament for me. You can do this for your students! You have an awesome responsibility because these lessons can dramatically alter a student's view of God and approach to the world.

I have divided each lesson into three main sections. The first is focused on the background of the biblical text. When you understand the historical background and social/cultural dimensions from which texts arose, it will help the students grasp the real meaning of the text. This section is for your reading. It will contribute to your teaching and provide background for the lesson that may or may not be referred to directly in the class session. The second section deals with the interpretation of these texts. In this section I provide answers to the "what does this mean?" questions. The third section is concerned with how these lessons can be taught. It provides discussion questions and recommendations for practical teaching methods.

These lessons will require preparation on your behalf. I have deliberately structured these lessons dynamically so you can alter and restructure the material in a way that fits your context and time frame. Please give adequate time to work through the material in advance.

My prayer for you is that you will journey with your students and seek to listen, understand, and embody the life God has called us to live! May the grace, power, and wisdom of Christ be with you as you lead these students through the Ten Commandments!

- J. Wesley Furlong

# 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 blackboard). 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

**S**ee 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

**F**ill 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.



## 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.

### Teen Lesson Three

# Who's in First Place?

*"You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3, NRSV).*

*We are shaped and fashioned by what we love. —Goethe*

#### SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20:3
- 1 Kings 18:20-39
- Romans 12:1-2

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Bibles
- Pens/pencils
- A copy of Handout #3.1 for each student
- Index cards (cut in 2) or small pieces of paper for students to copy Romans 12:1-2



#### PURPOSE

**To Know:** God is not content with being just one member of a long list of commitments. An idol can be anything that takes our focus and worship away from God, whether that be a person, activity, or possession.

**To Value:** God's will for our lives is that we simply allow him to be God of every part of our lives.

**To Apply:** Ask the students to read Romans 12:1-2 every morning before leaving home for the day.

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

**The nature of polytheism.** The people of Israel continually struggled with idolatry. Throughout the Old Testament the people are warned to stay faithful to Yahweh and avoid the temptations of Baalism. Why was Baalism such a stumbling block for the people? Baal was believed to be the god of fertility and was the source of rain. The people of Israel were dependent on adequate rainfall to ensure their survival. Baalism was the attempt to manipulate the gods of nature to meet the needs of the people. It was a strong temptation because the people could be in control rather than God.

**More is better mentality.** Why settle with one god when you could have three or four? This is what Elijah confronted on Mt. Carmel in 1 Kings 18. In this passage Elijah asked the people to stop living in two worlds. Either Yahweh was God or he wasn't. His message was that you cannot serve both Yahweh and the gods of other nations. You cannot look other places for what only God can provide. This text is a strong image of what Exodus 20:3 is demanding from the people. To serve Yahweh is to be distinct from all other people. You do not run after the things others run after because of who you are as a child of God.

**It is an issue of identity.** They were the people of God and would therefore need to reflect that by the way they lived. To choose between serving God and serving others is to choose an identity. Who will you be? In what ways does your behavior reflect who you are? It is these underlying questions that penetrate Elijah's message to the people.

## WHAT'S IT SAYING?

**The basis of the commandment is the quality of relationship.** The driving force of the Ten Commandments was to teach the people to be who they were. Rather than understood primarily as a list of moral obligations to please God, these commandments were first and foremost an ethical instruction on how to know and reflect God. The difference between these two is one of motivation. Their identity as the people of God would need to be reflected by the lives they lived. God was holy and therefore his people would need to be holy. The inner quality of relationship was the basis for the moral obligations. This is important because we, like the people of Israel, get this backwards. We want to work from the outside in while God wants to work from the inside out. Who you are is reflected by the life you live. The total sum of your words, thoughts, and actions extend from your heart. The purpose of these commandments is to align the hearts of the people with the heart of God so that their lives would reflect his.

**Relationship with God is unique and impacts every sphere of life.** The first commandment portrays the uniqueness of the relationship God wanted with his people. While all of the other people worshipped a pantheon of gods and would perform certain ritualistic practices in hopes of finding their favor, God said he would provide all of this as long as the people stayed faithful to him.

Set the stage. This commandment is first because it is the basis for all that will follow. The reason you abstain from certain practices and perform others is because you are in relationship with God. That single fact has implications for every sphere of life. The reason the people of Israel had so many laws and ordinances was not to make life difficult, but rather to insure that every aspect of life would be holy.

**The image of God in the world.** Since we find our very identity as people in relationship to God, we have a responsibility for how we live our lives. We are not our own, but God's. Life is a gift and carries with it certain obligations. This is evident in the first few verses in Exodus 20. The people were to be God's revelation in the world. In a real sense, they were to let the world know what the true God was like. The commandments are an effort to align the lives of the people to the life of God.

## WHAT'S IT MEAN FOR US?

God must invade the list! God is not to be one of many on a list of commitments; He must invade the list! The relationship he calls us to is not merely to put in our time and then go about our business. He is not interested in some of our time and some of our resources. He is interested in us. He invites us to hand over the whole package. Every area of our lives must reflect our identity as children of God. Our relationships with people, our behavior behind closed doors, and our thoughts need to mirror the fact that God is the only Lord of our lives. We are ruled by none other. He holds our complete allegiance and is present in every area of our lives.

# Interactive Lesson Guide

## GETTIN' GOIN'

Before beginning this week's lesson, spend a few moments talking about last week's topic. Throughout this series, keep re-visiting the action steps from the previous lessons. If these lessons are to leave any defining mark on the students, it will require serious attention to the Take Out section of these lessons. The students must be challenged to "flesh out" this material through their lives. Set aside several minutes at the beginning of each class session to remind the students of last week's material and dialogue about the responsive component with the students. How did they apply the lesson during the week?

Ask two students to volunteer to act out the following role-play. One of the students, Terry, is an avid soccer player. Terry has practices four days a week and games twice a week. Terry is always thinking about, participating in, or talking about soccer. The other student, Alex, also plays soccer but is not as fanatical as Terry. Both of the students attend the same church, however, Terry misses youth group activities and Sunday services all the time to attend soccer games. In this skit Alex is trying to convince Terry that he (or she) needs to come to the youth retreat next weekend. Terry gets defensive when Alex begins talking about priorities. The students can have a little freedom in developing this dialogue. Use this skit as a springboard to talk about the importance of putting God first in our lives.

After the skit, ask **Is it okay to miss church for sports activities? What does this say about our priorities? What are the areas that compete for our allegiance with God? Say Listen to this statement: your God is that which receives most of your attention, provides most of your identity, and that for which you would sacrifice anything else. Ask Do you agree with this statement? If so, how does it challenge your priority list and focus on life?**

## DIG IT

Ask someone to read Exodus 20:3. **Does this text have anything to say about our priorities and commitments?** If so, what?

Explain the nature of idolatry using the background material printed above.

**Do we have a problem with idolatry today? If so, how? What are some contemporary idols that we are tempted to worship?** In many ways our temptations are no different than those faced by the Israelites. The people wanted prosperity, identity, and protection. The gods we serve today are money, fame, people, etc. An idol is anything that diverts our worship away from God.

Read (or summarize) the story in 1 Kings 18:20-39. Ask **What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear this story? Say Someone has said that moving back and forth between God's way and our way is like "limping between two worlds?" Ask What is the problem with "limping between two worlds?"**

Perform the Trust Fall demonstration with one or two students. A student will stand straight with his/her back to you (or a trustworthy student). Instruct the student to fall back with his/her knees locked and legs straight. Stand behind the student and catch him/her. Some people are not comfortable with this exercise because they feel vulnerable. They cannot

see the person who is saying "fall back, I will catch you." Therefore, people often bend their knees as they are falling back.

After the demonstration, talk about the issue of trust. Ask **How is trust related to this week's commandment? Is the problem we have with "limping between two worlds" really a matter of trust?** Often teens have a difficult time trusting people. Their trust in someone may have been betrayed or they simply fear the vulnerability. Ask **Who or what do you trust? What does it mean to trust God? How do we show God that we truly trust him?**

Using the material above, discuss the issue of lifestyle reflecting identity and relationship as the basis for the first commandment. Ask **Why is this the first commandment?** Even if you abstain from murder, lying, and stealing, you cannot live a life pleasing to God unless he is truly the Lord of your life.

### TAKE OUT

Tell this story. **There was a man who was at a crossroad in his life. He had prayed for weeks that God would help him know what he should do with his life. As a last ditch effort, the man decided to enter the sanctuary one afternoon to pray. After several minutes of praying, he decided to give God a little help. He went to the church office and grabbed a notepad and pen. He said to the Lord, "I will begin writing down all of my options and when I come to the one that you want me to do, please just tap me on the shoulder and let me know." The man began writing and after a few minutes with no options remaining to be written, the man crumpled his paper and left the church. In recounting the story, the man said that as he walked out of the church, he felt the Lord speaking to him more clearly than he had ever heard before. "God was telling me to go back into the sanctuary, fall on my knees, and take out another blank sheet of paper. And rather than begin writing, the Lord instructed me to allow the blank paper to represent my life and allow him to fill it in."** What God desires from his people is that they simply allow him to be God of their entire lives, not merely part of a list of options.

Distribute Handout #3.1, Keep Life On Target. In the left column have each student write an activity in which they are deeply involved. In the middle column they can identify some parts of that activity that might draw them away from God and his plan for life. In the right column they should write something they will do to keep Jesus the Lord of that activity and their lives. This can be repeated in rows two and three. If it seems appropriate, invite the students who wish to share to talk about what they have written.

Reserve the last few moments of class for the students to copy Romans 12:1-2 on a small piece of paper or index card (cut in half). An option would be to have the scripture already printed and ready to distribute. The small size will allow the students to carry the scripture with them throughout the week. Challenge the students to read the scripture frequently throughout each day and offer a simple prayer, "Father, I offer myself to you as a living sacrifice. Show me your will for this day."

Close with a prayer of commitment.

# Keep Life On Target

In the left column write an activity in which you are deeply involved. In the middle column identify when that activity might draw you away from God and his plan for your life. In the right column write something you will do to keep Jesus the Lord of that activity and your life. Repeat the process for other activities in rows two and three.

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>TEMPTATIONS TO STRAY</u>	<u>JESUS IS LORD OF ALL</u>

## Carved in Stone

Embracing God's Value System

### Teen Lesson Four

# Getting Rid of the Idols

*You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God (Exodus 20:4-5, NRSV).*

*An extraordinary thing happened to me today... I saw Christ in a man.  
—John Gammie*

#### SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20:4-5
- Exodus 32:1-10
- John 15:1-5, 8

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- List of names of famous people for charades
- Bibles
- A copy of Handout #4.1 for each student
- "Lord, Be Glorified" song

#### PURPOSE

**To know:** God cannot be manipulated, replicated, or even fully understood.

**To value:** We cannot allow anything to come between or take the place of our relationship with God.

**To apply:** The question we need to ask first is not, "What must I do?," but "How does the reality of who God is shape my life?"

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

A common practice in ancient Israel was to construct monuments to represent the gods. These monuments were the places where sacrifices were offered and prayers were prayed. The worshippers believed they could manipulate the gods by performing certain rituals and practices.

The first three commandments make one single point: God has a unique claim on this group of people. They are to be separate as he is separate. Everything in the first three commandments is centered on the issue of identity. The identity of the people is in relation to God, therefore, they are to live out that reality in very specific ways. Before those ways are specified, however, the people are reminded who they are.

There are three problems with idols. First, God is distinct from other gods and must not



be approached as the other gods are approached. Second, God is not to be domesticated. Maybe even more important than concern for rival deities is the emphasis that God is greater than anything we could use to represent him. The text wants to make it clear that God is distinct from other gods and so the people must not worship the deities of the other people groups. The text is also concerned that we do not associate God with things of this earth. The insistence that statues not be erected in God's honor is an attempt to acknowledge that while God has chosen to journey and abide with his people, he cannot be contained or even represented by anything within this world. Finally, another issue with idols is that over time the lines begin to blur between the idol and what it represents. The deity becomes so associated with the idol that they are basically one in the same. But God is a god who is always moving and creating. He is alive and victorious. He leads the people by fire and by cloud. Any attempt to create an idol is seen as an attempt to box God in.

## WHAT'S IT SAYING?

**Attempting to box God in.** There is an old song that is sometimes used at church camps. One of the lines says, "If I had a little white box to put my Jesus in, I'd take him out and (the singer gestures with a kissing motion and sound) and put him back again." While that song is innocent and intends nothing disrespectful, it depicts one of the biggest problems we face in Christianity. Today we do not construct wooden idols or golden calves, but we sometimes attempt to control God. I think that if I can just do this right or jump through that hoop then maybe God will give me what I want. There are a lot of books that argue that if you follow these simple steps then God will bless you. If you can just say the right words or do the right thing then God will respond the way you are hoping. The image of the vending machine is fitting. We see something we want and put our quarter in hoping that God will deliver. The second commandment is an effort to get rid of this mentality within the people of God. God is God. His ways are above ours and he cannot be bound, neither by a wooden stature nor the "little box" that we try to keep him in.

**The image of God in the world is within his people.** While the reflection of God cannot be found in wooden statues or golden calves, it can be found within his people. From the beginning it is clear that the way God has chosen to reveal himself is through his people. The commandments are an effort to align the people with God in such a way that they can reveal to the world the very nature of who God is. The question that we are confronted with is, Does our life adequately reflect who God is? Can people know what God is like by spending time with me?

## Interactive Lesson Guide

### GETTIN' GOIN'

Before beginning this week's lesson, spend a few moments dialoguing about last week's topic. Remind the students of the material covered and ask them to share how it impacted them throughout the week. Ask **What impact did Romans 12:1-2 have on you this week?**

Begin this week's lesson by playing a few rounds of charades. Prepare a few small pieces of paper with the names of heroes and/or popular icons that most of the students can identify. Putting one name per piece of paper, these persons can include famous athletes, singers, or actors. Ask a student to draw a name, then act out the speech and gestures of the particular person while members of the class attempt to guess who he or she is impersonating.

When you have used all of your names, spend a few moments talking about these people. Ask **What do they have in common? What are they most known for? Why do people look up to them so much? Do you think these heroes can become idols? Does**

## **an idol have to be a person? What is an idol? At what point does the admiration of an individual or lifestyle become an idol?**

Idolatry takes on different forms in different cultures. It is safe to say that the problem with idolatry is as serious in our culture as it has ever been. Teens are taught very early to find their identity in material possessions and positions of power. Ball players and young singers are worshipped because they "have it all." Money, fame, power, and the envy of other people are the hallmarks of a life well lived. While the people in the Old Testament stories worshipped other deities in hopes of securing their existence, our culture worships money and fame in hopes of securing meaning and purpose.

One of the major issues you will need to highlight in talking about current idols is the nature of worship. Ask **What is worship? To what or whom do you ascribe worthiness? Where do you get your identity and sense of purpose?** Say **As we look at the second commandment and talk about the nature of idolatry, let's keep the issue of worship at the forefront of the conversation.**

### **DIG IT**

Have someone read Exodus 32:1-6. Ask **Why do you think these people wanted to make idols? What were they hoping for in this golden calf? Why didn't they trust God to provide for their needs?** Say **Let's read Exodus 32:7-10 to see God's response.** After reading the paragraph, ask **What was God's response? What can we learn from this text? When God is slow to answer and we are unsure that he even hears us or cares, what should be our response? How can we fight the temptation to find our meaning and purpose in things we can see and control?** This is at the heart of idolatry!

Revisit the question **What are the idols in our lives?** Anything can become an idol: sports, people, jobs, and even church can take the place of God if we are not careful. **What are the idols that you see teens worshipping?** Read Exodus 20:4-5. Ask **Does this commandment apply to our idols like it did to the Golden Calf?**

Transition from the discussion of idols to talk about the relationship God wants to have with his people. Read John 15:1-5. Compare and contrast the vision of John 15 to the situation in Exodus 32. **How significant is a divided allegiance to God?** The image of John 15 portrays God molding his children from the inside-out. (See also Jeremiah 18 for the potter and clay metaphor.)

Read John 15:8. Say **When we abide in Christ, then we are equipped to reflect the glory of God.** Distribute Handout 4.1, The Divine Reflection. As a class, decide on seven characteristics of God and write them in the seven spaces in the left column. In groups of three or four, ask the students to fill in the boxes in the right column with ways they can reflect each characteristic of God. This is to help them begin thinking about what their lives are saying about God. Conclude this activity by talking about what the groups have written.

### **TAKE OUT**

Use The Image Of God In The World Is Within His People section above to begin the closing section. Emphasize that individually and as a church, we are to show God to the world. The Ten Commandments were given to provide direction for us to live in such a way as to honor God.

Ask the teens to look at the worksheet they've been working on. Ask them to circle one thing in the right column that they will do this week to more clearly show their allegiance to the Lord God Almighty.

Sing "Lord, Be Glorified."

Close with prayer.

# The Divine Reflection

<u>Characteristics of God</u>	<u>HOW MIGHT YOU REFLECT THAT CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD THIS WEEK?</u>

## Carved in Stone

Embracing God's Value System

### Teen Lesson Five

# The Power of Names

*You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name (Exodus 20:7, NRSV).*

#### SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20:7
- James 3:3-12

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Bibles
- Baby name book
- Paper
- Pencils or pens



#### PURPOSE

**To know:** A name reflects the inner quality and character of what is named.

**To value:** There is power when we speak in the name of God. When we speak using the name of God, we are invoking God himself—in prayer and in conversations with people.

**To apply:** We are called to testify of God's works to the people with whom we share life. We are called to "name" God to people who may not understand or see clearly. This will be discussed more in the section titled The Master Detective.

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

The Hebrew word for "word" is *dabar*. The definition can either mean "word" or "thing." For the Israelites there wasn't much difference between a word and the "thing" it represented. There were no "empty words." The reason curses and vows were so important was because once something was spoken it became a reality. A name carried with it an even stronger significance. The names of people were windows into who they were. God's name was so holy that the people would not even speak it. Rather than say Yahweh, the people would substitute the name Adonai. A person's name shaped another's perspective of who they were. This is why we find God occasionally changing people's name. With the change of their identity and calling came with it a change of name (Abraham, Peter, Paul).

There could be several ways that one could misuse the name of the Lord but it basically came down to one central issue: the people must not ascribe something to God that was not of God nor fail to acknowledge something that was of God. To use the name of God rightly is to be in right alignment with him and know what is of God and what is not and to be able to speak accordingly.

## WHAT'S IT SAYING?

We tend to use words and names flippantly today. While we may not view someone's name with as much seriousness as the Israelites did, names still carry a lot of importance. The childhood saying "sticks and stones can break my bones but words will never hurt me" just isn't true. The names we give to people make a significant impact on their identity. For example, it has been shown that if you continually tell children that they are dumb, they will eventually believe it and live up to that reality, even if it was not initially true.

There is a reason this commandment is situated where it is. This command is central to what it means to be the people of God. The way that we speak is a direct reflection of who we are. It is essential that we name things as God does. It is vital that we understand the significance of God's name and speak it in a way that is worthy of who he is.

Why is it wrong to use God's name in vain? The emphasis in this text is not directly targeted at vulgar speech, but it does include it. The problem with using God's name in vain is that it trivializes what is most sacred. As we have already stated, words are not empty. To refer to God casually or to use his name in ways that are not to his glory is a failure to understand the power that his name evokes.

**The Master Detective.** Christians in the world in many ways are like Sherlock Holmes. They are able to see what others are unable to see and it's their job to bring others to that place of awareness. They are on the scene and are able to put the pieces together and make sense out of clues that just don't fit. The Christian as a master detective is the one who says "that's God at work in your life." Their responsibility is to name God as he works in the lives of people. Many people are unable to see God at work and it's the job of the Christian to name what God is doing and who he is so that people can come to that place at the end of the story where the person says "ah-hah, I see." The importance of using God's name correctly is not just that we avoid profane language, it's also that we speak the reality of who he is in the world. Our language (as well as our lives) testifies to God and bears witness to his work in our lives.

**South Pacific Story.** There was a story told of a village on a South Pacific island that possessed a very interesting marriage ritual. The village still worked on the barter system and men looking to marry needed to consult the fathers of prospective brides. There was this one particular young man who was from the wealthiest home and was the most revered in the entire village. He was able to select any bride that he chose. When the day came for him to marry, he decided that he wanted to marry a girl from the Delondeal family. This family was without much livestock and the name carried little weight in the village. She was not very attractive and no one understood why he was taking her as his bride. As was their custom, the groom agreed to pay the father of the bride a certain number of cattle in exchange for her hand in marriage. Most bride prices ranged around two or three cattle. When the village heard that he had paid the family six cattle, they were astounded! Why would he do that? It was the talk of the town for weeks. As was also their custom, the newly married couple retreated to the other side of the island for about six weeks. Once the six-week period had ended, the couple returned and to the amazement of everyone, the bride looked radiant. Her entire demeanor had changed. This man saw her as a queen. She was beginning to reflect the reality that her husband spoke into her life.

This story was told at a marriage seminar to illustrate the importance of words. While some of the practices within this culture can seem foreign and/or degrading, the point it makes is powerful. Words can literally speak worlds into existence in the lives of people. With the spoken word, God brought the created world into existence and with the spoken word we can do the same in the lives of people.

# Interactive Lesson Guide

## GETTIN' GOIN'

Spend a few moments discussing last week's lesson. Recap the major points that were discussed and invite the students to share how they reflected or failed to reflect the characteristics of God throughout the week. Ask **How did the lesson speak to you? What questions do you have about idolatry in our current culture after being more aware of it this week?**

In the introduction to this lesson, you want the teens to begin thinking about the power of names and words. Begin with the biblical names and then move to our present context.

If you have a chalk- or whiteboard, write the names Shear-jashaub and Lo-ruhamah on the board. Ask **Why do you think the names in the Old Testament sound so strange?** Parents in the Old Testament did not attempt to come up with the latest or most appealing names when naming their children. Names were windows into people's identity. Shear-jashaub was Isaiah's son and his name meant "a remnant will return." Lo-ruhamah was Hosea's daughter and her name meant "no pity."

Ask **How many names (in the Bible) can you think of for God? What do these names tell you about God?** These names tell us who God is. By naming God Immanuel, Provider, and El Shaddai, we are saying that God is present in the midst of our lives and that he will keep and sustain us.

Ask **Do you know what your name means?** You might want to bring a copy of a baby name book. **Are you named after a family member? Is there a special story behind how your name was chosen by your parents?**

Ask **Have you ever noticed that God often changed a person's name in the Bible? Why would he do that?** Since names told you a great deal about the one to whom you referred, God would change people's name when he called them to a specific task. Abraham, Sarah, Peter, Jacob, and Paul were all called to a specific task and God changed their names to reflect that reality.

Ask **Is God the only one who changes people's names? How do people re-name each other?** People attempt to redefine each other's identity by attaching labels and names.

Say **You've heard the saying "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." Is that true?** No! Words can leave a scar deeper than physical wounds. Say **Just as words sometimes damage human relationships, so we can betray God when we speak poorly.**

## DIG IT

Read James 3:3-12. Ask **How many images does James provide to show the power of the tongue? What do all of these images have in common?** Even though the tongue is small, it possesses a power greater than anything else.

Ask **What are some of the ways we use speech wrongly?** One of the main things you will want the teens to learn from this specific text is the seriousness of our spoken words. God is very concerned with the way that we speak. Our words are never empty. Out of the mouth the heart speaks! People will sometimes say something hurtful to someone else and then say, "I'm just kidding." James 3 dispels this notion and says that words should not be taken lightly.

Say **One of the ways we speak poorly is when we misuse the name of the Lord.** Ask someone to read Exodus 20:7. Ask **What's wrong with using God's name in vain?** Refer back to earlier material and the opening conversation. Summarize the What's It Saying? section. Ask the students what the implications are for such a commandment. Say **There could be several ways that a person could misuse the name of the Lord, but it basically comes down to one central issue: the people must not ascribe something to God that wasn't of God nor fail to acknowledge something that was of God. We need to speak the truth about God. To use the name of God rightly is to be in right relationship with him and know what is of God and what is not and to be able to speak accordingly.**

You may need to discuss this further with the teens. **What does it mean to ascribe something to God?** When you invoke God's name, you are saying something about who he is. This is why it is important to avoid saying "God" as a choice word. Such an act trivializes God.

A helpful image is that of the Master Detective. (See previous section.) Share with the teens the plot of a murder mystery from *Sherlock Holmes*, *Perry Mason*, *Murder She Wrote*, *C.S.I.*, or other source. Typically a murder occurs and no one knows who is responsible. The majority of the show is given to uncovering the events that led to the person's death. The master detective is the one who is able to put together all of the clues and make sense of the evidence. He or she is able to see what no one else can see. At the end of the show, there is always an "ah-hah" moment when the detective describes what happened and who was responsible. Say **As Christians we are to discern God at work among us, then tell others what we have discovered.**

Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Each group is to prepare a list of names that would describe the youth group, something that would identify them as followers of Jesus Christ. As the groups share their lists with the class, ask them to talk about the significance and meaning of each name.

Ask **How do our words reveal God to others? As you think about this class, what are we saying (or not saying) that is constructing people's view of God? What can we do to make our words a better witness for God?**

## TAKE OUT

Review the first three commandments. Explore the relationship between them. You might begin by asking **What does the commandment about speech have to do with avoiding idols and worshipping only God?** The first three commandments are the basis for those that follow. Before God instructs the people how to live, he instructs them as to who they were. The first three commandments portray the unique relationship God wants to have with his people, a relationship that would bear witness of God to the world through the life and speech of the God's people.

Share story of South Pacific village. Discuss situations in the teens' lives where you have seen the power of words to build up and encourage. Pledge to each other that this week you will speak well of each other and in doing so bring honor to God.

Close by reciting the Lord's Prayer together.

## Teen Lesson Six

# Fond Memories

*Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it*  
(Exodus 20:8-11, NRSV).

### SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20:8-11
- Joshua 3-4
- 2 Timothy 1:3-7
- John 4:24
- Mark 6:30-46

### WHAT YOU NEED

- Bibles
- A rock for each student
- Index cards
- Pens/Pencils
- A copy of Handout #6.1 for each student

### PURPOSE

**To know:** The Sabbath is not just about taking time off. It is reclaiming our significance and purpose in time.

**To value:** Honoring Sabbath allows us to be reminded that life is not up to us and that God is not primarily concerned with what we can produce.

**To apply:** Give the Sabbath to the Lord. Allow that to be his time and no one else's. Avoid the temptation of allowing this commandment to simply be a hindrance to certain activities and privileges.

### WHAT'S GOING ON?

The observance of a Sabbath was unique to the Israelites in ancient Palestine. People



lived in a subsistence economy in which everyone was needed and there wasn't the luxury of being able to take time off. If people didn't work, they didn't eat. This is the context in which the observance of Sabbath is to be understood. In a world where people viewed life as up to them, the Israelites viewed life as a gift from and dependent on the God who called the world into existence and fashioned humanity with his own hands.

The importance of Sabbath cannot be overstated. It was the time when the people realigned with God's purpose for the world. God's intention was continual communion with his people. His goal was continual Sabbath. It is clear from the opening accounts in Genesis (see 2:2) that to keep Sabbath is to be in sync with the way God intends the world to work.

## WHAT'S IT MEAN?

**To Remember.** In honoring the Sabbath we are taking time out of the busyness of life to remember both who God is as well as who we are. When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River Joshua instructed that a pile of stones be placed as a reminder of what happened. When children would ask about the pile of rocks, the parents would tell them their story. They couldn't forget their story. The first verse of Exodus 20 begins "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." This was their story and it was important that they never stopped telling it. Sabbath was central for this purpose. It was a time of re-alignment with God in the original intention for creation.

**To Worship.** Worship was central to their identity. While worship is not directly mentioned in this passage, it is clear that Sabbath was used as a time for God to draw his people back into communion with him. Through remembering we are brought to the place of worship. In resting and ceasing from activity we are reminded that life is dependent on God. In keeping Sabbath we express trust that God will protect us, provide for us, and continue to be the God who goes before us. While all of life is to be given in worship, Sabbath is the day that we set aside distinctly for that purpose.

**To Find Strength.** By the time of Jesus, observance of Sabbath had become very distorted. The focus had shifted from a time of rest and remembrance to ritualistic observance of difficult commands. When confronted on the issue Jesus responded "Man is not made for the Sabbath, but Sabbath is made for man." That time was set aside for all living beings. Everyone needed that time to withdrawal from work and to rest. We were not created to work continually. We were created to live in communion with God. While work is essential to our survival, Sabbath is the goal of creation.

## Interactive Lesson Guide

### GETTIN' GOIN'

Begin the lesson by distributing index cards to the students. Instruct them to write a short embarrassing moment or funny story about themselves. Collect the cards and read the

stories without sharing the name. Ask the students to guess whose story was told.

When all the cards have been read, ask the students to share some of their family traditions (Christmas, birthdays, vacations, Thanksgiving, etc.). If they cannot think of any tradition, they can share a tradition they would like to establish. One of the goals of these introductory activities is to get the students thinking about the importance of remembering and stories. Use the material from the What's Going On section to make a transition from these activities to discussing the role of Sabbath.

## **DIG IT**

Read Exodus 20:8-11. Ask **Why do you think God instituted a day of rest? What did he want to happen on that day?**

Say **We are going to look at three main aspects of the observance of Sabbath: remembrance, worship, to find strength.**

**Remembrance.** Read the To Remember section printed above. People who forget their past lose sight of the future. The emphasis on remembrance is everywhere in scripture. When the people disobeyed God and lost sight of their future, the verdict was always that they forgot their identity because they forgot their story.

Say **We live in a very busy society and often fail to see the significance for quiet and rest.** Ask **What are the things in our society designed to give us more time?** (Drive-thru windows, cell phones, quick internet access, etc.) Say **Our society is so present and future oriented that it is easy to lose sight of the past.** Ask **Why is the past important? Why is it important to remember our history?**

Give each student a rock. Share the story of Joshua leading Israel across the Jordan River (Joshua 3-4) and highlight the significance of the rocks. Ask **What did those rocks represent?**

Ask the students to think about their past. To help them in their personal reflection, ask **What events and people have shaped you the most? Who taught you the most about God?** After a few moments of reflection, invite the students to place their rocks in a pile in a corner of the room. As each rock is placed on the pile, ask the person to share (if they would like to) a significant event that he or she wants to remember. This testimony should relate to a person or event that has shaped their understanding of God and the world. After the students have finished placing the rocks in a pile, share a personal story (or recount the Joshua story) that shows the benefit of remembering. Tell the students that these rocks will serve a similar purpose to that of Joshua's rocks. They will remain in the room through the next several weeks (or beyond) and whenever the student sees the rocks they will be reminded of God's faithfulness.

**Worship.** Read the To Worship section printed above. A significant part of remembering is worship. When you look back and see God's faithfulness in the past, your response should be to worship.

Read 2 Timothy 1:3-7. **Ask What did Paul remember?** (His forefathers' faith; Timothy's tears, faith, spiritual gifts; Lois and Eunice.) **What did the memories produce in Paul?** (Thanksgiving to God.) Say **Paul remembered how God had been faithful, and his response was to honor God in worship.**

Ask **What is the purpose of worship? Why do we sing songs in Church?** The words we sing shape our view of God and the world. We express our gratitude and allegiance to God through many different means, including singing. **Is worship only a matter of singing?** (See Romans 12:1-2.) **If not, what else is involved in worship?**

Read John 4:24. Ask **How are we to worship God? How is the observance of Sabbath an act of worship?** In observing Sabbath we show God that we trust him with our lives and acknowledge that life is not up to us, but is truly a gift of God. We set aside time for God and him only. An unwillingness to do this suggests that God is not in control.

**To Find Strength.** Say **Sabbath is not only a day for spiritual renewal, but also physical and emotional renewal.** Read the To Find Strength section printed above. This section will not need as much explanation as the other two. The main area to highlight in this section is that God is not concerned with only our spiritual lives. You are a "whole" person and that includes your emotional, spiritual, and physical life. We are to worship God with everything that is within us.

***Sabbath is not only a day for spiritual renewal, but also physical and emotional renewal.***

Read Mark 6:30-32. Ask **Why did Jesus direct the disciples to find a place to rest?** Be ready to briefly tell the story of Mark 6:33-44, then read Mark 6:45-46. Say **It seems like Jesus was very determined to find a place of rest, not only for himself, but also for the disciples.** Ask **Why do you suppose Jesus worked so hard to find a quiet place?**

Ask **What is our purpose for living? Does God have a purpose for our lives?** Yes! Our purpose is to worship God and enjoy his fellowship. God designed the Sabbath for us to renew our strength, remember who and whose we are, and enjoy fellowship with him.

Ask **Based on the actions of people you know, is Sabbath still important? If not, why doesn't the Sabbath seem to have the same importance today as it did in previous times? How do we typically spend Sundays, our day of rest? How should we approach the Sabbath? What changes might we make to better align ourselves with the fourth commandment?**

## TAKE OUT

Distribute Handout #6.1, Sabbath Keeper. Complete the handout as a class, in small groups, or individually. When the list is finished, ask each teen to note the one they will seek to implement that day.

Close with a prayer.

# Sabbath Keepers

We seem to have an easier time making a list of what not to do in a Sabbath observance than in making a list of what we are to do. Let's conquer that inclination. Using the three parts of a Sabbath we discussed in the session, write a list of things we might do to be Sabbath Keepers.

<b>TO REMEMBER</b>	1.  2.  3.
<b>TO WORSHIP</b>	1.  2.  3.
<b>TO FIND STRENGTH</b>	1.  2.  3.

### Teen Lesson Seven

# Honor One Another

*Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you (Exodus 20:12, NRSV).*

#### SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20:12
- Ephesians 6:1-4
- Luke 2:41

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- A copy of Handout #7.1 for each student
- Honorable Mom & Honorable Dad bags (see Gettin' Goin' section)
- Bibles
- Paper
- Pencils/pens

#### PURPOSE

**To Know:** This commandment is a call to receive life as a gift.

It is a reminder of who we are and what it means to live in community.

**To Value:** In honoring our parents we are expressing honor to God.

**To Apply:** Take some time this week to meet with an elderly person in your community. Offer any assistance that you can give and then take some time to ask questions and share life stories.

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

In looking at this commandment we must ask ourselves about the central audience. Who is being directly addressed? The answer seems clear; everyone in the community. This is true, but there is more. While the commandments are generally directed to all of those within the community, they are specifically spoken to the head of the households for implementation throughout the community. What does this mean? The typical application made from this text is that children need to acknowledge the place that God has given their parents. We often think that this commandment is primarily directed toward the young in our community. This commandment, however, stretches well beyond an admonition for children to listen to their parents. In fact, the adults of the community are just as responsible to this commandment as the youth. This would at first seem to be a peculiar statement for a youth curriculum, but if understood correctly, it could revolutionize the worldview of our teens. If this text is a command to honor your father and mother, but is just as much directed to adults as children, what is it saying about honor within the family structure? To answer this question we must first understand the context from which this commandment came.



The Israelites lived within a subsistence economy. This meant that everyone's survival was dependent on each person pulling his or her own weight. The community was indispensable. Men had their roles. Women had their roles. There was no such thing as a "teenager" as we understand the term today, because when children were old enough to work they were considered adults. Everyone's well being literally depended on others fulfilling their obligations to the family. In a setting like this it was easy to neglect and mistreat those that were unable to contribute to society. The elderly could easily be tossed aside since they were not contributing to the system that supported them.

In this setting the force of this commandment is understood. The fifth commandment is a call to honor and value the family system which includes all members, even those unable to contribute to the economy. The father and mother have authority over the child. They have given life to the child and are responsible for his or her well being. They are given the most serious task of all, to instruct and teach the child how to live. When the parent ages and is unable to contribute to the family, they are still to be honored and respected.

This is a wonderful picture of God's grace and vision for authentic community. The parent who takes care of the vulnerable child is in turn taken care of by that same child when he or she is vulnerable. Here we have honor in its truest sense: we acknowledge and respect those responsible for shaping our lives by bestowing to them the fruits of their labor through ours.

Our attitude toward the family system is a direct reflection of our attitude toward God. Parents are to be honored and respected. Children must value the system and community into which they have been born. Even though as we mature we cease being dependent, we must never cease to revere and honor our parents.

## WHAT'S IT MEAN?

**How is this relevant?** If this commandment is primarily concerned with adults taking care of the elderly within their families, how does it speak to our teens? First of all, it would be a mistake to separate children's responsibilities to their parents and parent's responsibilities to the elderly. The wonder of this commandment is that it is concerned with all members of the community. Parents have a responsibility to their children to teach them how to live as God intended. Children must respect and honor their parents for they have been placed in their position by God. It is important that teens gain a sense of the full scope of this commandment.

Our society (much like ancient Israel) has a tendency to gauge value by what individuals produce. We pride ourselves in self-autonomy and often find identity in competition with others rather than in community with one another. Sadly, personal worth is often perceived according to the material things we have attained. This is dangerous. We must not fall into the trap of seeing people only for what they have and what they can do for us. The fifth commandment provides the bridge between our relationships with God to our relationships with each other. It teaches us that value and honor are relational terms and that to receive honor we must first bestow it upon those whom God has entrusted to care for us.

**Life is a gift.** One of the great lessons of this commandment is the simple reminder that life is a gift. It is the wonder of creation rather than mass manufacturing. One only needs to glance down at his or her belly button to realize this point. We all have been parented. We all have received life from another. Someone fed us when we were unable to feed ourselves. Someone changed our diapers and taught us about the world. It is clear that we were made to need each other. We were not designed to stand alone. When we understand and embrace life as a gift rather than a right, our natural response is gratitude. And how do we express our gratitude? Through honoring God and our parents through the gift of our lives.

**What happens when the parents are not worthy of respect?** There seems to be an underlying stipulation within this commandment. The child is to honor the father and mother as the father and mother honor God. The child expresses obedience to his or her parents in the same way that the parents obey God. These two actions are interconnected. But what happens when the parents are not obeying God? Are the children to continue expressing honor? Here we must look at the commandments in light of the other commandments. The first four commandments establish the type of relationship we are to have with God. The last five commandments discuss our relationships with one another. This fifth commandment is where we see most clearly how the first four commandments are lived out in relationship to one another. It is intentionally positioned as the bridge from the previous four to the next five. When we are unable to live in right relationship with God, it will have ripple effects into all other relationships and aspects of life, especially the family.

In looking at the fifth commandment in light of all the others, we first realize that honoring God is first and foremost. Parents have been given the unique privilege and responsibility to model and instruct their children into the type of life God has designed for his people and because of that they are to be honored. When they no longer model this life, however, they run the risk of forfeiting the right to receive honor. This is not to say that parents should not be obeyed or respected if they are not in line with God's desires for his people. What it does say is that God is to be honored above all and when there is a conflict of interest the child must obey God. The story in Luke 2:41 of Jesus leaving his family to spend time in the temple is a good example of this point. He was not disrespectful or abrasive. He was not intentionally going against his parent's wishes. In fact, it is not even that he wasn't honoring them. For Jesus, when the conflict of interest arose between what his heavenly father had desired and his mother, he chose to follow God. It's important to realize that this commandment is not simply to justify the family structure and prevent anarchy against the parents. This commandment is directed towards the greater good-right relationship with God and humanity. It is within the family structure that children gain their first concept of who God is and how life ought to be lived. When the parents do not fulfill this obligation, it must be filled by another.

**The role of the church.** Usually when a child is dedicated or baptized the pastor or priest will hold the child before the congregation and charge them with the responsibility of the child's life. Training the child is not simply left to the father and mother. The larger "Christian" family plays an integral part in the child's development. When biological parents are not doing this or when they are not actively involved with the child's life, the church must take on this role.

## Interactive Lesson Guide

### GETTIN' GOIN'

**Divide class into two groups and give each person Handout #7.1, Top Ten Reasons to Honor Parents, and a pencil or pen. Ask each group to develop a list. Tell the students that some of the reasons can be humorous. When both groups have completed their lists, have the students share them with the class.**

For a more active introduction to the lesson, divide the teams into two groups. Give one group a grocery sack filled with "Honorable Mom" items like an oven mitt, sunglasses, slippers, etc. Give the second group a sack filled with "Honorable Dad" items like a wallet, shorts, baseball cap, etc. Have each group decide what each item in the bag represents for an "honorable" Mom or Dad. Each group reports to the class by "dressing" a member of the team. For example, the "Honorable Mom" group might say the oven mitt represents the love Mom expresses by baking birthday cakes, the sunglasses represent her presence in the bleachers at a soccer game, and the slippers represent quiet nights when we sit in the family room and talk. When

both groups have finished the report, you might take a photo of each "model," paste the photo in the center of an 11x17-inch sheet of paper, then label each item and say what it represents. The posters could be displayed for a few weeks.

## **DIG IT**

Read Exodus 20:12. Ask **Why do you think this is a commandment?** Spend some time walking the students through the history of this text. To grasp the significance of this lesson, they must first understand the context from which this command came. (See the section titled What's Going On?)

Ask **Who was the primary audience of this commandment? Say We usually see this commandment being targeted directly at the young members of a family. Ask If this command is also directed to the adults, what does that say about honor? Do you think this command is a call to honor anyone beside parents or are parents the only concern of this command? How can we express honor to the marginalized and overlooked members of our family and broader community?**

Read Ephesians 6:1-3. Ask **Why does Paul say that it is "right" to obey parents? What might be included in the promise that if parents are honored things will "go well?"**

**Is there any significance to the phrase "in the Lord" in verse one? What are we to do if our parents are not "in the Lord?"** Read Ephesians 6:4. Ask **What does it mean to "exasperate?" Is every disagreement I have with my parents because they have "exasperated" me?**

Ask **Are all parents worthy of honor?** This is a complicated question for many teens. Some of your students may come from broken homes or have a difficult relationship with their parents. Allot some time to discuss this issue. Keep in mind that this discussion must be handled very delicately. You might begin by reading or summarizing the material printed above, What Happens When the Parents are not Worthy of Respect? Use the story of Jesus in Luke 2:41 to talk about the relationship between obeying God and obeying parents. We are called to honor parents, but this does not mean that children must endure abusive behavior or any treatment that contradicts God's commandments.

Ask **Who are the adults in the church (besides your parents) that help you grow in a positive, healthy manner? How might you honor those people?**

## **TAKE OUT**

Divide the class into two groups to plan a recognition dinner for the adults in the church. One group will discuss the meal time, including seating arrangement, menu, and service. The second group will plan the program to be held after the meal. Emphasize that the purpose of the dinner is to honor and thank the adults. Check the church calendar for a time when the teens can host the dinner.

In closing, ask the teens to come up with at least one way they can fulfill the fifth commandment this week. Ask **How can you express honor to your parents this week? How can you express honor to someone who is sometimes ignored?** Help the students create a simple, doable plan in response to these questions.

One option might be for the students to take some time this week to meet with an elderly person in the community. Suggest that they offer any assistance that they can give and take time to ask questions and share life stories.

Close with prayer.

# Top Ten Reasons to Honor Parents

List ten reasons why children should honor their parents.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.



### Teen Lesson Eight

# Honoring Life

*You shall not murder (Exodus 20: 13, NRSV).*

#### SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20: 13
- Matthew 5:21-26; 5:43-48

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Bibles
- Movie clips
- Index cards
- A copy of Handout #8.1 for each student
- Pencils/pens



#### PURPOSE

**To Know:** We are to protect and uphold all human life for all are made in the image of God.

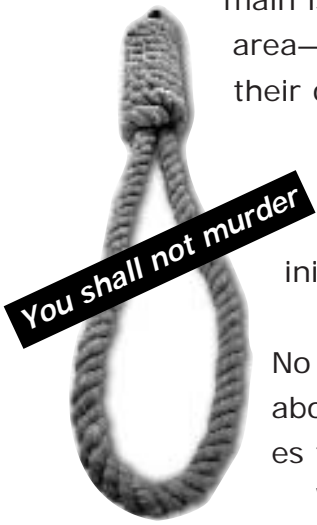
**To Value:** We are called to exercise justice and mercy in all human relationships. This means that we do not treat others as they always deserve, but rather we are willing to forgive, care for, and sustain human life at all cost.

**To Apply:** What can you do to forgive, care for, or sustain human life this week? As we will see, this lesson is not just about abstaining from evil but also working for the good.

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

The simplistic structure of the sixth commandment demands careful interpretation. Is this commandment a decree that calls for an end to all human killing? Should we interpret "you shall not murder" as literally as it seems to be indicating? And if so, what about Exodus 21:12 (just one chapter later) where a stipulation is given for exercising capital punishment? Or how must we handle the texts found within the deuteronomistic history (Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings) where God called the people to destroy the lives and villages of neighboring city-states?

There were three arenas where human life was taken by others: nationalistic war, capital punishment mandated by God for legal offenses, and personal disputes. It seems that the



main issue addressed by the sixth commandment is with respect to this last area—people killing other people for personal gain, over disagreements, and on their own accord. It seems pretty clear that the Israelites viewed war and capital punishment as instituted and compelled by Yahweh. So from this commandment we cannot infer that all human killing is a deviation from the law, but rather, the commandment seems to be focusing on human killing initiated by humans rather than God.

Human life is considered sacred because it is formed in the image of God. No person has the right to take the life of another for only God can create or abolish human life. This commandment is a practical application that expresses the value and source of identity we have as human beings.

While stated in the negative, this commandment also summons individuals to protect and support the life of others. As we have stated previously, we live within community and our lives are intrinsically interwoven. The commandment "you shall not murder" is not merely an individual matter. We are bound to one another in community and must therefore work to uphold each other's lives. When we see human injustice and exploitation, we must stand against it and lock hands with those who are being abused, neglected, and impoverished. We must vocalize the needs of those without voice and refuse to allow systems, governments, and people to deprive others of the life God intended.

### **WHAT'S IT MEAN?**

**Jesus takes the command to the heart.** Jesus takes this commandment one step further by dealing with the problem at its core. In Matthew 5:21-22a he says, "you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment." Murders performed with the hand or with the tongue are always first performed with the heart, so Jesus called the people to purify their hearts. Rather than exchange life for life, the people of God are to bless those who curse and make friends of enemies (to whatever degree is possible).

**Love your enemies?** What is the reason behind the command "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you?" Why did Jesus change the dynamic of this commandment? What is wrong with "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth?" How is the kingdom of God different from this system of justice?

Matthew 5:45 goes on to say that we are to live this lifestyle of forgiveness and love because then we will be sons and daughters of God. The world will know God through knowing his people. The mercy of God is experienced through the mercy of his children. If the people of God fail to embody the attributes of God, the people of our world will never witness it.

It is here within the teachings of Jesus that we receive a glimpse into the heart of God. This is who God is and how he relates to us. (See Matthew 5:17-6:34.) Therefore, if we are to be sons and daughters of God, we will relate to humanity in the same manner, a lifestyle marked by unconditional love, mercy, and forgiveness. The apostle Paul in his letter to the

church at Corinth wrote, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). He goes on to say that this relationship we have with Christ changes not only our motivation but also the way that we see people. We treat people with love and grace rather than anger and retribution because Christ has treated us this way and we have become conduits of that love.

**What about today?** There are many heated and highly publicized contemporary issues that involve this commandment: abortion, euthanasia, war, suicide, and capital punishment to name a few. In dealing with this command we are confronted with four simple words that are supposed to capture our response to these significant and dividing issues. The genius and heart of this commandment is the simple fact that we are to honor God's creation and to prevent its destruction or harm.

The heart of this teaching is clearly the all-inclusive nature of the kingdom. We are to love our enemies because they are invited to the table of God's feast. In fact, we are to be the bearers of the invitation. It is through our love that they will most clearly see the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.



## Interactive Lesson Guide

### GETTIN' GOIN'

Begin this week's lesson by discussing the issue of murder on a broad level. The main goal of this introduction should be to get the students thinking about whether or not murder is ever acceptable. You may want to begin by showing two or three movie clips that depict different types of murder (capital punishment, suicide, euthanasia, war, personal killing, etc.). After viewing the clips, ask the students whether any of these types of murder are justified. Possible clips to explore: *Saving Private Ryan*, *The Green Mile*, *A Few Good Men*, *Air Force One*.

Another possible opening would be a roundtable debate. Print the different types of murder on individual index cards with their respective definitions on the back of the card. Distribute the cards to the students and ask them to read the definition aloud. For each type of murder ask **When is this form of murder justifiable?** If the response is "never," ask **How do we know this is true?**

From this introduction, the students should have discussed the various types of murder and the value of human life. In what capacity is a human allowed to decide the fate of another human being? Does the Bible have anything to say about this?

### DIG IT

Read Exodus 20:13. Ask **How does this scripture relate to what we have said about the various types of murder? Are all forms of murder included in this prohibi-**

tion? **Why is it difficult for us as a society to agree on these matters?** Refer to the What's Going On? section to guide this discussion.

Say **Jesus talked about this commandment in the Sermon on the Mount, but he focused on the attitude of the heart instead of merely the act of murder.** Read Matthew 5:21-26. Ask **How does Jesus reinterpret the sixth commandment? Why do you think he made it internal rather than just external? What is wrong with an "eye for an eye" and "tooth for a tooth" approach to justice? Are Jesus' teachings concerning neighbors and enemies possible and/or practical?** These questions could occupy many hours of discussion. Be careful to steer the conversation towards the goal of both the commandment and Jesus' teaching.

Say **Jesus not only taught that a person was not to harm another, but to always seek the best for another person, even if that person is an "enemy."** Read Matthew 5:43-48. Ask **What is the reason why a person should love an enemy?** God loves each of us and we should do no less. **What happens within us when we begin to pray for those who treat us poorly? What is the reward for those who love as God loves?**

Say **The genius and heart of the sixth commandment is the simple fact that we are to honor God's creation and to prevent its destruction or harm. The heart of this teaching is clearly the all-inclusive nature of the kingdom. We are to love our enemies because they are invited to the table of God's feast. In fact, we are to be the bearers of the invitation. It is through our love that they will most clearly see the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.**

*Jesus not only taught that a person was not to harm another, but to always seek the best for another person, even if that person is an "enemy."*

## TAKE OUT

**The sixth commandment is formed in the negative as a prohibition of a certain act. If it was formed as a positive statement what would it say?** For a guide to discussing these questions see the What's It Mean? section.

Distribute Handout #8.1, Agent of Life. Divide the class into three groups and assign each group one of the case studies. After a sufficient length of time, ask each group to report to the class what a person might do to be an agent of life.

In closing, ask **How will you reveal the grace and mercy of God throughout this week?** After a few thoughtful moments, close with prayer.

## Agent of Life

**1** • You are part of a Big Brother/Big Sister program where high school students are assigned to at-risk children at the elementary school. Even though you haven't been given a lot of background information, after meeting with Pat for a number of weeks you suspect that he was placed in a foster home because of his parents' drug abuse. You think that Pat has seen a lot of violence and self-destructive behavior. What might you do to be an agent of life for Pat?

**2** • Crystal has been absent from school for several days. Rumor has it that she attempted suicide on Tuesday afternoon. You don't usually hang out with Crystal, but she is in three of your classes. When she comes back to school, what might you do to be an agent of life for Crystal?

**3** • Your best friend's father has cancer. His condition was quite advanced before the cancer was diagnosed and the prognosis is not good. What might you do to be an agent of life for both your friend and his/her family?

### Teen Lesson Nine

# Maintaining Right Relationships

*You shall not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14, NRSV).*

#### SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20:14
- Hebrews 13:4
- Matthew 5:27-28
- Proverbs 4:23
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Song collage
- Bibles
- A copy of Handout #9.1 for each student



#### PURPOSE

**To Know:** God is concerned with every aspect of our lives. Our thoughts, relationships with members of the opposite sex, and behavior behind closed doors are all areas that reflect and shape our relationship with God.

**To Value:** Human life and relationships are precious to God and must not be abused or exploited. This commandment (as well as those surrounding it) shows us that God has a plan for how our lives should be lived in relationship to him as well as those with whom we share life.

**To Apply:** Reflect on your relationships with members of the opposite sex. Are your relationships with and attitudes towards members of the opposite sex marked by purity and good intentions? Do you think God is pleased with your thought patterns and spoken words concerning members of the opposite sex? Is your life inline with the life God calls for in these commandments?

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

Behind this text is a desire to protect and uphold God's plan for marriage and family. Much like the previous commandment, this apodictic law (formed as "do not...") requires careful interpretation due to its limited scope; especially for application to teens. This commandment raises several questions that we must confront in order to understand what is meant here by adultery. By limiting this commandment to adultery, does this mean this is the only sexual sin with which God is concerned? What about the stories of men in the Old Testament who had several spouses? What was the family structure like in ancient Israel?

Initially, this commandment was only concerned with adultery within the union of marriage. It was an effort to protect the family structure from inward collapse by prohibiting others from infringing upon what God had brought together. The main issue at stake with this commandment was that men could not have a relationship with a married woman. When this happened the most basic and essential part of Israel's existence was fractured. People could not survive without family. As was stated in earlier lessons, everyone's lives were dependent on the family unit working together. When this was broken through sexual sin, the ripple effects could be felt in every aspect of life.

Over time the scope of this commandment's interpretation broadened. Whereas the commandment initially was focused on marriage infidelity, it came to be interpreted in its broader sense of sexual impurity. This impurity included fornication (sex before marriage) as well as anything else that would breach the plan God had laid out for marriage. The heartbeat of this commandment is that God has placed enormous value on humanity and the institution of marriage. As is the case with everything God has designed for good, this institution can be abused, distorted, and manipulated. Within the seventh commandment we find God calling his people to protect the institution of marriage by refusing to give to another what belongs to one's spouse.

The comparisons drawn between Yahweh's relationship with Israel and man's relationship with woman cannot be overlooked. The parallels are so pronounced that the same word is used to describe both relationships (*yada*). When the prophets spoke of Israel's idolatry they often used adultery and prostitution as the metaphor. Both relationships required covenant faithfulness and were to be set apart as distinct and free from outside corruption.

### ***WHAT'S IT MEAN?***

**What God has called good.** Ancient Israel's view of sexuality and human relationships is in stark contrast to the self-indulgent and debased views with which we are bombarded from mainstream media. What teens witness on MTV, in music lyrics, and in the movies concerning sex is usually drastically different than what they find in the Bible. To even state this point seems unnecessary. The popular view of sex primarily consists of a mere physical act for the purpose of gratification. This is a significant departure from the Bible that depicts sex as symbolic of one's relationship with God and participating in the beauty of God's ongoing creation in the world. It is a physical act that unites two people in the deepest intimacy possible. However, it is not merely a physical act. What Israel understood was that sex had implications that went far beyond physical fulfillment.

This high view of sex and the marriage covenant does not mean that the people always adhered to God's plan or practiced covenant faithfulness in relationships. One main difference we find between the Israelites and us is that for ancient Israel there was not the distinction between sacred and secular, private and public, that we have today. All of life was ordained by God and was to be lived in proper relationship to him. Most people today interpret the Israelites fixation with law codes as legalism. For ancient Israel, however, all of life was sacred and was designed to glorify God. The laws expressed a desire to align even the most mundane task to the will of God.

In relating this commandment to teens there are two things we must keep in mind: a) God has a wonderfully orchestrated plan for how man and woman are to relate to one another, and b) it is very difficult in our society to understand this plan due to the ways in which we have perverted God's design. Teens that seek to understand and follow God's plan for marriage

and sex encounter much confusion over the conflicting views they receive Monday through Saturday in contrast to Sunday. In attempting to work through these differences it is easy to view sex as an evil thing or revolt against the church's strict standards. To compound the problem, the message from the church often is nothing more than negative judgments on our mainstream culture's appropriation of sex.

**Desire.** If we are to faithfully deal with this commandment in the world of our teens we have to ask what struggles they face in attempting to follow God's plan for marriage. And in dealing with these issues we must be careful not to frame everything in the negative. The standards governing our life are meant to bring us freedom rather than bondage. In talking to teens about abstaining from sex we must show the vision God has for marriage and allow them to understand the how and why other alternatives do not work.

We can learn a lot from the Old Testament world in regards to this issue. God ordained sex and called man and women to enter into a covenant relationship similar to that of Yahweh and Israel. Sex was a significant part of the human relationship and was viewed with a great deal of meaning. The act brought forth life and united two persons as one. People began allowing desire to overrun their virtue, however, and the results were devastating. The same temptations people encountered in Old Testament times are still being encountered today.

## Interactive Lesson Guide

### GETTIN' GOIN'

Open this week's class by asking **From what source do most teens develop their view of relationships and sexuality?** Most researchers agree that the media is the strongest influence on teenagers with respect to relationships and sexuality. Ask **Where have you seen correct and incorrect views of relationships and sex in the media?** Allow the teens time to share examples of specific scenes in movies or television shows.

As the teacher, the week before this lesson you might work with two or three teens to produce an audio collage of songs played on a radio station teens listen to often. Include songs that talk about sexual desire. Discuss the content of the songs and the behavior they encourage.

Say **In 1999 a movie about three teenage boys trying to lose their virginity before the high school prom was released. *American Pie* was described by Blockbuster (blockbuster.com) as "a raunchy teen hit." You might not be surprised to know that many teens flocked to this movie. You might not even be surprised to know that many Christians watched this movie without any reservation. What might surprise you a little is that young actors in the film were confessing Christians who saw no contradiction between their behavior and their beliefs. Thomas Ian Nicholas plays in a Christian band that produces music "by God, through God, and for God." Seann William Scott says he was often referred to as "church boy." Ask Do you agree with these actors that their behavior on the movie should not be seen as contradictory to the teachings of Christianity?**

Ask **How different is the media's portrayal of sex from that of the Bible? Why do you think the Bible teaches people to wait until marriage for sex?**

## DIG IT

Ask someone to read Exodus 20:14. Share with the teens the Old Testament view of sex and marriage using material from the What God Calls Good and Desire sections above. Ask **Why do you think God has such strict standards governing sex and marital relationships? Are the views of the Bible out of date or asking too much? How might your friends at school answer that question? Educators? Entertainers? Parents?**

Read Hebrews 13:4. Ask **What does it mean to honor marriage? What benefit comes to a person who honors marriage? The marriage bed?**

Have someone read Matthew 5:27-28. Ask **Why do you think Jesus stressed the internal thought life of a person rather than focus solely on committed actions?**

Similar to the commandment regarding murder, this prohibition of adultery is framed negatively, however, it should not be thought of (or spoken of) as simply a prohibition. Both the commandment in Exodus and the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount have a picture of what a right relationship looks like. These teachings are aimed at steering people away from acts that are harmful. It is important to know what these teachings are trying to produce. Ask **What do you think this commandment would look like if it were expressed positively?** For this exercise see the What God has Called Good section printed above.

It is important for teens to have answers to the why questions. God wants us to save sex for marriage for a reason. The act of sex is designed to unite two persons in the deepest intimacy possible. It is not just a physical act! Our society that focuses on "the now" often views sex as a mere physical engagement between two people for the purpose of pleasure. This is a serious distortion and degradation of sex. It is not an act that will leave someone unaffected nor will it be easily forgotten. When someone has sex outside of marriage, he or she is giving to another what belongs to his or her future spouse.

Distribute Handout #9.1, God's Call to Sexual Purity, a study of 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. You have several options on how to use this worksheet. You might go through the worksheet as a class. Or consider dividing the class into small groups for discussion of the worksheet with each group presenting a brief report to the class. You could divide the class by sex, the boys with a man leader and the girls with a woman leader. Select the option that best fits your group, the one that will encourage the greatest interaction with the scripture. Save the discussion of Proverbs 4:23 for the closing section.

After going through the worksheet, ask **What are the largest areas of temptation for teens? (Sex before marriage, pornography, etc.) Why does the Bible instruct us to avoid these potential pitfalls?** As you discuss the practical aspects to these teachings be careful to use positive and redemptive language. Teens have heard different teachings on sex. They may not have heard positive teachings from the church. Allow the students to see the wonderful plan of God for marriage and how the commandments are designed to protect that plan. In making a positive presentation, you might mention three key elements: God created sex, sex is a good thing, and God has a plan for human's sexuality.

## TAKE OUT

Read Proverbs 4:23. Ask **How can we "guard our hearts" from the onslaught of sexually charged commercials, TV shows, movies, and songs?** Each student should write the responses to that question at the bottom of Handout #9.1. After the list of responses is complete, ask the teens to circle one thing on the list that they will do this week to guard themselves and maintain sexual purity.

Close in prayer.

# God's Call to Sexual Purity

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Proverbs 4:23

**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5.**

**What does God desire for us?**

- If we are to be the people that God desires us to be, what must we avoid?
- In our culture, how do you see the "passionate lust" Paul mentions in verse 5?
- What can a person do to "control his own body" (verse 4)?
- How can a person learn to do this?

**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:6.**

**What are some ways that a person is guilty of sexual sin against another person?**

**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8.**

**How is it that to reject the call to sexual purity is a rejection of God?**

**Read Proverbs 4:23.**

**What are some ways we can guard our hearts?**

### Teen Lesson Ten

# Working for the Good of Society

*You shall not steal (Exodus 20:15, NRSV).*

#### SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20:15
- Ephesians 4:28
- 2 Corinthians 9:12

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Bibles
- Handout #10.1
- Pencils and pens



#### PURPOSE

**To Know:** To steal from someone means you somehow rob them of their personhood. This can occur in large and small ways. It can be through theft of personal possessions as well as refusing to share personal possessions with those in need.

**To Value:** To really understand what stealing is we must first recognize our responsibility to our neighbor. We must work for the good of our neighbor and not just abstain from evil.

**To Apply:** What can you do, personally and as a group, to work for the good of your neighbors?

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

The last three commandments all deal with our social responsibilities within community. The eighth commandment is a call to recognize our interdependence and to protect the personhood of others by protecting their possessions and ensuring their right to life. The ninth commandment deals with the responsibility to speak truthfully so that justice would prevail within the community. If this commandment were not followed, justice would be severely limited since everything was based on the credibility of the spoken word. The tenth commandment internalizes much of what the eighth commandment is concerned with protecting. The heart that seeks its own good rather than the good of the community is not in line with God's plan for community. In trying to interpret these three commandments separately, it is helpful to understand how they function together in developing a vision for a God-centered, just and compassionate community.

The possessions of families in ancient Israel were essential to their identity. There were not many items that families owned that were designated as simply pleasure or decoration. Everything was significant and contributed to their identity as a family. Possessions were either for survival or they were symbols of their identity. To steal from someone would be a crime against his or her very person for the two were very connected. In our society if someone's house is robbed, an insurance claim is filed and what was stolen is replaced. This was not the case in ancient Israel. To be robbed of possessions was a serious matter for it threatened their very lives.

## WHAT'S IT MEAN?

It is a little difficult to understand the full magnitude of this commandment in our society. We have been taught that our possessions are our possessions and result from hard work and individual achievement. We do not have the community emphasis that is seen in the Bible. To understand the full range of this commandment we must grasp the responsibility people had to one another in community. Those with many goods must provide for those with little goods and must not "steal" their right to sustain life.

In our society this commandment is refreshing to those with many possessions because it seems to be an effort to protect them and their possessions. This commandment places a great deal of responsibility, however, on those who possess goods that others do not have. One child is born into a family with only a single-parent whose job barely covers basic expenses. Another is born to privilege. If those "with" do not work for the good of those "without," they are failing to abide by the eighth commandment.

**Responding to God's blessings.** In the kingdom of God, our goods are not the result of our hard work and individual achievement, but rather are the result of a gracious gift from God. When we understand life in this manner it is easy to see our responsibility to those in need. One person is blessed with resources and accordingly thanks God for the blessing. In response to what they have received they go on to live a carefree, extravagant life for their personal pleasure. Another is also blessed, but responds by living a life of simplicity and uses his or her resources to advance the lives of those in need. Who is following the eighth commandment? Are they both? Is the first person following the eighth commandment if he or she does not take possessions from other people? It would seem that the answer is "no." The first person may not have physically taken anything from somebody, but his or her failure to use his or her resources for the benefit of the community is a failure to live out God's commandments.

**Rationale for not stealing.** In Ephesians 4:28 Paul wrote, "He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his hands, that he may have something to share with those in need." What is most interesting about this admonition from the apostle is his rationale for thieves to stop stealing. He does not attempt to persuade thieves that people's property is for their own use and must not be infringed upon by others. He doesn't even mention the rights of the individual. This does not mean that these arguments are not valid. For the apostle, however, the reason thieves are to stop stealing is that they have a responsibility to contribute to their society. They are not to take from those who have but rather are to provide for those who have not. The same heartbeat is in the eighth commandment. The people of God must see beyond their own needs and use their time, energy, and resources for the betterment of the community.

## Interactive Lesson Guide

### GETTIN' GOIN'

Open the class session with two role-plays. Two people are needed for each. In the first role-play, a mother (or father) is shopping with her (or his) child. As they leave the store, the security buzzer goes off and a Nintendo game is found in the child's pocket. The manager agrees to allow the parent to handle the situation. What might the parent say to communicate the eighth commandment to his or her child?

After the role-play, ask **What reasons were we given to abstain from stealing as children? If you were the parent, what reasons might you give?**

The second role-play involves a teen who discovers that his or her best friend has been stealing clothes and CDs. The students are to act out what might occur the next time the two friends are together. What's the best way to confront the theft?

Ask **What happens to people who are robbed? Have you ever noticed how people respond to burglary?** Burglary often creates a distrust of people. Sometimes security measures are taken to protect one's possessions.

### DIG IT

Read Exodus 20:15. Ask **What are some subtle forms of stealing for which we need to be on guard?** (Using the office copy machine for personal business; "forgetting" to return a friend's book; keeping the extra change a clerk gave you by mistake; etc.).

Discuss how Israel understood this commandment using the background material provided above. Share with the students the effects of living in a subsistence economy that required reliance upon one another. Discuss the distinctions between our culture and the culture of the text. Ask **What is the impact of stealing from another person in a culture where the people rely on each other? How are things different in our culture where individualism is stressed?**

Say **This commandment seems pretty clear. The message is simply "don't steal!" It's something our parents probably taught us and is one of the few areas that doesn't seem open for interpretation. Everyone has the right to his or her own possessions. If someone infringes upon this right it is a direct violation against that person.**

**One of the reasons this commandment seems so basic is due to the level with which we have bought into the "American dream." Everyone has the right to acquire "goods" for his or her own happiness. This pursuit is central to one's identity. The more one achieves and the higher one climbs the ladder of success, the more important and recognized they become. In many ways, this is the basis of value in our society. In our society the act of stealing is wrong because it threatens one's identity.**



The motivation behind this commandment is different though. Rather than a "radical individualism," this commandment is concerned with the needs of the community. People must not steal from one another because of their interconnection and reliance upon one another.

**Share the scenario of the two responses to money in the Responding to God's Blessing section above. Ask** In these two scenarios, who followed the eighth commandment? Are they both? Is there anything more to this commandment than the prohibition against stealing? Can a person steal without actually taking someone's possessions? **Ask the students to provide an example.**

**Use the What's It Mean? section above to teach the students the main concern of this commandment. The students need to realize that there is more here than abstaining from stealing. The reason they are not to steal is because they have a responsibility to their community.**

Ask **What changes might we need to make to take better care of each other?**

Read Ephesians 4:28. Ask **What does Paul tell us about his work ethic? What are the benefits of hard work? What is the reason Paul gives for thieves to give up stealing and go to work?** (To have something to share with others.)

Distribute Handout #10.1, Open Hand Living. In light of the previous discussion, have the students reword the eighth commandment as a positive statement. Have the students create a list of ways that this commandment might be fulfilled. After reading 2 Corinthians 9:12, explore how our service to others is an expression of thanks to God.

## TAKE OUT

In closing, have the students create a service project the class can do together. Look for a way the students can "give back" to the community. The project might flow naturally out of your work on Handout #10.1.

Or, if you would rather that the students work individually, invite them to come up with a plan where they can live out the positive light of this commandment throughout the week. Say **Think about people you encounter throughout the week who are in need. It could be students, teachers, or even casual acquaintances. Their need may not even be physical. What can you do this week to work for their good?**

Close with prayer.



# Open Hand Living

Restate the intention of the eighth commandment, "You shall not steal," as a positive statement.

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<u>List some of the needs that you see in the community.</u>	<u>List ways you and your friends might meet these needs.</u>

Read 2 Corinthians 9:12. How is it that "open hand living" becomes an expression of thanks to God?

### Adult Lesson Eleven

# Living and Speaking the Truth

*You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor (Exodus 20:16, NRSV).*

#### SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20:16
- James 3:3-12
- Philippians 4:8
- Colossians 4:6

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Bibles
- Paper
- Pencils and pens

#### PURPOSE

**To Know:** As Christians, we are witnesses to the truth in Christ Jesus. Our lives and words tell the story of God's creation and redemption. When we fail to speak truthfully to one another, we are failing to live up to our purpose as a child and ambassador of God. We are to proclaim truth in a world of lies and deceit.

**To Value:** Do you value the truth more than affirmation? Is it more important to be truthful than accepted? Does your life and words mirror the truth of God? Questions like these help us to gauge our ability to follow this commandment.

**To Apply:** Read the book of James this week. Ask the Lord to help you be more conscious of your words. Strive to be a faithful and blameless witness of our loving and truthful savior this week.

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

**Connected to the third commandment.** The ninth commandment is closely tied to the third commandment which is concerned with using the name of God properly. The commandment here, however, adds the social dimension to the third commandment's application in the community. In the same manner that we speak the truth about God, we must speak the truth about our neighbor. The two go hand-in-hand. As we stated in the lesson on the third commandment, the importance of speech for ancient Israel cannot be overemphasized. Words carried power to create and destroy life. Just as God called the world into existence with the spoken word, so humanity possessed the power to speak worlds into existence in the lives of people.

**Courtroom setting.** One area this commandment seems concerned with is in respect to administering justice in the community where everything was based on people's testimony. There was no DNA testing or crime lab's that could bring empirical evidence against someone. People's lives were dependent on others in the community telling the truth. When the truth was not upheld and when someone could not be taken for his or her word, people became more isolated and were unable to work together as a community.



**The law of the spring.** James 3:1-12 uses four metaphors to illustrate the same point: the tongue, though small in size, contains an immense power for destruction or creation. The last metaphor James uses, fresh and salt water flowing from the same spring, provides a strong image for this eighth commandment. In talking about our speech within community, we need to ask ourselves what produces our speech and what was its created purpose. These two questions move us beyond the words themselves to the motivation behind them. Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. When the Apostle Paul summoned his congregation in Philippi to focus on whatever was true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy, he understood the law of the spring. It is the thought patterns and the meditations of the heart that produce the spoken word. Words reflect the inner-life of a person. This is why the eighth and third commandment are connected. Our relationship with God shapes our relationships with people. When we are not living in right relationship with God, we will not be able to live in right relationship with those with whom we share life. Our spoken words provide one of the clearest and most accurate assessments of our relationships.

The book of James is interested in that it is directed to struggling Christians and devotes more attention to the spoken word than any other book in the New Testament. For James, the two are inseparable. When "fresh water" is flowing from one's mouth it speaks of a clean spring out of sight. When a person's words are used carefully to build others up and witness to the life and death of Christ Jesus, it reflects an inner quality that is in right relationship to Christ.

## Interactive Lesson Guide

### GETTIN' GOIN'

Open the class session with a role-play for two teens. Courtney approaches Melissa with gossip about what Megan did on Saturday night. Courtney tells Melissa what she heard about Megan. Melissa is a good friend with both Megan and Courtney. She doesn't want a rumor to spread about her friend, Megan, but she also doesn't want Courtney to get upset. The first time the students do the role-play, Melissa tries to keep Courtney from getting upset, no matter how unfair it might be to Megan. Discuss what you observed in the role-play.

Allow the teen playing the part of Melissa to huddle with two friends. The friends in the huddle are to help Melissa decide how she will try to stop the rumor, even if it makes Courtney angry. Do the role-play a second time with Melissa trying to squash the rumor. Discuss what you observed in the role-play.

Upon completing the role-play, ask the students if they encounter problems with rumors at school. Ask **Why do people talk about each other in such hurtful ways? What are the results? How should you respond if you encounter this type of situation?**

### DIG IT

Read Exodus 20:16. Ask **What are some ways people bear false witness against other people? What are some of the reasons people lie to one another?** (Seek acceptance, shame of the truth, self-interest, etc.)

Explore how the failure to live out this commandment has affected our society. Ask **What are the ramifications of a people who fail to tell the truth to one another?** (Isolation, fear, competition, etc.) **What are some recent examples of people failing to follow this commandment?** (Politicians, church leaders caught embezzling money, etc.)

What would our society look like if people followed this commandment? (Trust would replace fear and skepticism; contracts would not be needed as much because we wouldn't be as concerned to protect ourselves from each other.)

Say **The Ten Commandments not only show us how to live, but they also reveal God to us. On these two tablets of stone we see the nature and heart of God.** Ask **What does the ninth commandment tell us about God? What do the Ten Commandments tell us about God's intention for the community of faith?** We witness the vision God has for his people and the community through which he will reveal himself. It is a community that protects each other and looks out for each other's needs. It is a community that speaks the truth to one another concerning God and other people. It is a community that understands the source of life and to what end it should be aimed. It is a community that recognizes the uniqueness and value of human life and defends those that may be exploited or overlooked.

Read James 3:3-12. Think about the role-play with Courtney and Melissa. Say **What if Courtney's words were true and Melissa knew they were true?** Ask **Is it okay to "speak the truth" about another regardless of how harmful it is to the one you are speaking about? Is it ever okay to speak damaging words about another?** Remind the students that this commandment is not a license to speak harmful words about other people even if they are true.

Read Philippians 4:8. Say **The apostle Paul reminded his congregations to focus on the good, pure, noble, and upright.** Ask **What is the relationship between this admonition of the apostle Paul and James' discussion on the power of the tongue?** It's not just a matter of what you say. It's also a matter of what you think about and how you view people. When a person focuses on another's strengths rather than weaknesses, he or she will be much more prone to speak positive and uplifting words. The difference between these two is like night and day. When you look at people for who they can be rather than for what they lack, the mistakes they've made and so forth, you will naturally speak "graceful" words when talking to them and about them.

Ask **Have you ever known anyone who was good about building up others?** Ask for personal examples. Say **Jesus is the perfect example of this teaching. He always viewed people for who they could be and never for what they had done in the past. This is why sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes were attracted to him rather than be scared of his criticism.**

## TAKE OUT

Form groups of three or four. Ask the students to think of ways that they can speak words of encouragement to others throughout the week. Are there persons who are often degraded by others? Are there persons who have been damaged by the spoken words of others? With one of these persons in mind, create a spoken message that might encourage him or her. Have the groups report to the class.

Encourage the students to read the book of James this week, looking for instructions on how to speak in a manner pleasing to God.

Close this session with a prayer. Immediately after the prayer, say **"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone"** (Colossians 4:6).

### Teen Lesson Twelve

# Beneath Our Actions

*You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, or his maidservant, nor his ox, or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor (Exodus 20:17, NRSV).*

#### SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20:17
- 2 Samuel 11

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Bibles
- "Must Have" bag (see Gettin' Goin')
- TV commercials collage

#### PURPOSE

**To Know:** God not only cares about our actions, but also our thoughts and feelings. Mere external observation is not what the commandments are intending to produce. As this commandment points out, they go much deeper than that, into the crevice of our hearts and minds where actions are conceived before performed.

**To Value:** This commandment is an effort to align our hearts and minds to God so that our lives may also reflect the reality of who he is. The question of what we value and love the most reflects who we serve and seek to imitate. If our desires are money, popularity, and success as defined by the world's standards, we will not be able to serve God.

**To Apply:** Spend time reflecting on the things that mean the most to you. Is God just one member on a long list of commitments? Does he permeate the list? The commandments are an effort to re-order all of life in the way it was intended, that is, to glorify God. Is this reality reflected in your daily life?

#### WHAT'S GOING ON?

**Why the last?** It is interesting that we find this commandment listed as the tenth. The last few we have looked at were brief, specific applications to what it means to live in right relationship to God within community. This last commandment, however, takes us a little deeper by looking at the question of *motivation* and *desire*. This commandment is different from those previous in that it does not offer another external requirement. The tenth commandment clarifies how the previous commandments are to be understood. It is not enough to say "I don't kill or steal." What we find here is God placing the measure around our heart and reminding us that this is where all actions are birthed. If we are to live in right relationship with him as well as our neighbors, our hearts and minds will need to be pure.



## WHAT'S IT MEAN?

**The Nature of Agape.** Jesus dealt with this commandment in different ways throughout the New Testament. It is rather obvious that the people had perverted the law by failing to emphasize its heart and proper motivation. The Sermon on the Mount is a beautiful portrayal of the way the Ten Commandments were intended to function in the life of the people. Rather than merely abstaining from killing, the people were not to have evil thoughts of their enemies, and were to bless and serve them. Rather than merely abstaining from adultery, the people were not to have improper thoughts concerning members of the opposite sex, and were to bless and serve them. The message interwoven throughout the Sermon on the Mount was "seek first the kingdom." Keep your priorities and your desires in the right order and you'll not have to worry about your life. The people of this world live as if everything was up to them. It is not to be this way among the people of God. Trust God to supply your needs and receive life as a gift.

While there are three basic words for "love" in the Greek language, only two of them are used in the New Testament. *Phileo* is a brotherly or friendly type of love. *Agape* is the love that is reserved for God. It is the covenant love that orders our priorities correctly and allows us to live as God intended. It is the complete love that unifies our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.

Love, however, can be terribly distorted. Sometimes we find ourselves in a downward spiral of unmet expectations and unfulfilled dreams. The problem is not that we have too much desire, but that we desire the wrong things. All too often we seek fulfillment in the trivial and temporary. This commandment is a call to re-prioritize our desires and to find identity and meaning in God rather than in things and people who will only frustrate and disappoint us.

**What's the deal about coveting?** To understand the use of coveting here, we need to pull the curtain back and look at what motivates people to covet one another's life and possessions. When we possess envy and jealousy it reflects an inner discontentment with life. It says that we are finding our meaning in things that were never intended to supply self-worth. The community God seeks to establish through these commandments is threatened when people find their identity in things rather than right relationship with him and the community. The tenth commandment is a warning to protect our hearts from greed and jealousy. It is also a reminder that we are not to worry about our life, but should receive it as a gift and trust God to provide.



## Interactive Lesson Guide

### GETTIN' GOIN'

Ask the teens to fill in the blank, **If only I had \_\_\_\_\_, life would be perfect.** Ask **What is it that we think will make our lives complete?**

**In our society, what prompts us to want more and more things?** (Advertising; peer pressure, etc.) Divide the group into teams of three or four. Without looking in the bag, ask a person from each team to reach in the bag and pull something out. The team is then to write a television commercial trying to convince the audience that this is a "must have" item. Be creative in what you put in the bag, maybe a little off the wall: fruit, drinking straw, article of clothing, etc.

Try to help the teens see the absurdity of many of the messages we see on TV. Ask the teens if they ever witness this type of advertising on television? Where? (Ask for examples). Does it work?

An alternative opening would be to video tape several TV commercials for analysis. This video tape might be something two or three of the teens put together the week before. After showing the commercials, discuss them while you point out the absurd claims and implications often made by the media.

Say **The truth is that no *thing* can make life perfect. Desire is a tricky and deceitful thing because it can never be content. There will always be *more and more recent*. Much of our desire is not the result of true need as much as it is imitative and competitive. We desire certain things because we have seen it on television or seen others with it. Often behind all of this is an effort to gain a sense of self-worth and accomplishment. We want others to acknowledge us and to recognize our uniqueness.**

**How does this pertain to clothing? Is it right to find your identity in the name on your jeans? What are other status symbols that teens use to create identity? How should we respond to these type of things?**

## DIG IT

Read Exodus 20:17. Ask **If we were writing this commandment, what items from our culture might we include in the list?** Write the student's responses on a chalk- or whiteboard, if one is available. **What does it mean to covet?**

Ask someone to read 2 Samuel 11. (You may want to use several students due to the length of the passage). Ask **Where do you see the tenth commandment being broken in this story? What were the ramifications of David's sin?** Many people were affected, including David's own family. Emphasize the public nature of our sins. We often think that our sins have no effect on other people. Use this story to illustrate our inter-connectedness as human beings.

Read or summarize the What's The Deal About Coveting? section. Ask **How do you see these truths reflected in the David and Bathsheba story? What can we learn from this story about coveting?** Ask the students to make specific parallels from this commandment to the temptations they face on a daily basis.

Ask the students if they have witnessed or heard of any contemporary examples of someone who coveted. Say **In 2001 a Kansas City pharmacist was arrested for diluting chemotherapy drugs to increase his profit margin. The irony of the story was that he was a church member who was trying to cover a large building fund pledge he had made to his congregation. This story, as well as the David and Bathsheba story, illustrates the fact that this temptation is just as difficult for people in the community of faith as it is to non-believers.** Ask **What can we do to avoid this dangerous temptation?**

Spend some time talking about the nature of agape love. (See The Nature of Agape Love section.) Ask **What steps do we need to take to realign our priorities and make sure that our worship is being extended to God rather than the gods of our society?** Remind the students that desire is not evil, but rather it is often misdirected to the wrong things.

To illustrate this, make a comparison to the alignment of car tires. Ask **What happens a car's tires are out of alignment?** Just as a car has trouble steering if the tires are out of alignment, so we create problems for ourselves when our desires are in conflict with each other. It is important to maintain a single of focus and seek first the kingdom of God.

## TAKE OUT

Distribute Handout #12.1, Life Alignment. Instruct the students to use the closing minutes for personal evaluation. What are the things that are competing for their allegiance with God? What are their strongest desires and how do they align with their relationship with God? It is important for teens to hear that there is more to life than the things of this world. Their meaning as a person should not be gauged by their level of popularity, collection of designer clothing, medals earned, or any other achievement or position. Peer pressure is strong, however, and this call to find your identity in Christ is the most important, but sometimes difficult step to take. Our identity must be grounded in our relationship with God. Once we are confident with our identity in Christ, it becomes easier to avoid the temptation of coveting.

Close in prayer.

# Life Alignment



If the four tires on this car represented the four things most important to you, what would they be?

Are the tires all headed in the same direction? Do you need a life alignment?

What steps will you take this week to ensure that you are headed in the right direction and not swayed by the things of this world?

What are the potential potholes you may face this week in attempting to avoid the temptations of coveting, that is finding your identity in other people and material possessions?



# Carved in Stone

Embracing God's Value System

## Teen Lesson Thirteen

### On the Tablet of Our Hearts

#### SCRIPTURE

- John 15:1-13
- Jeremiah 18:1-6

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- A copy of Handout #13.1 for each student
- Bibles
- Piece of fruit
- Piece of artificial fruit
- Play dough
- Vines and wire from a craft store
- A Ten Commandment card for each student, available at a Christian book store



#### PURPOSE

**To know:** God calls us to surrender our lives and allow him to change us from the inside out through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**To value:** Just like any relationship, our relationship with God requires time to grow. Setting aside deliberate time for prayer, scripture reading, and the other disciplines is essential if we are to abide in Christ.

**To apply:** Set aside 15 minutes a day for the Lord this week. You can use this time for meditating on scripture or praying.

#### PREPARATION

**This is the final lesson for this curriculum. Its purpose is to review the overall content and thrust of the material. We hope that the students have picked up on the interwoven themes that run through all of the commandments. John 15 is a scripture that captures the heart of the Ten Commandments. The emphasis we have placed on relationship preceding behavior is inherent in this scripture.**

The problem with the Israelites who first received the Ten Commandments was that they never allowed the law to penetrate their hearts. The Ten Commandments were only inscribed



on the tablets of stone; they never permeated their hearts.

In many ways we struggle with the same temptation. You cannot take an artificial piece of fruit, stick it on a tree and expect it to grow. To grow, it must be attached to the vine and find its life-giving sustenance through abiding on the vine.

Use this last lesson to reflect on the nature of the Ten Commandments and the life to which Christ has called us. Allow the students to process how the world of the commandments speaks to their world of school, activities, and relationships.

## Interactive Lesson Guide

### GETTIN' GOIN'

In the first lesson of this series the teens were asked to write as many of the Ten Commandments as they could. Start this final lesson in a similar way. Distribute Handout #13.1, God's Top Ten List. Form groups of three or four students and instruct the students to write out the Ten Commandments from memory in the left column. Have each group write at least one life application for each commandment in the right column. Tell the students that they will have an opportunity to complete the final exercise on the worksheet in a moment.

When the groups have completed their work, go through the list as a class. Briefly review each commandment and discuss the life applications the groups wrote for the commandments. Show how the various commandments relate to each other. For example, the opening commandments speak of living in right relationship with God while the last group of commandments speak of living in right relationship with one another.

When you have finished discussing the list, ask the students to work in their small groups to summarize the Ten Commandments in a sentence of two. Spend some time reflecting on the students' summaries

### DIG IT

Ask a student to read John 15:1-13. Once the student has finished reading the scripture, place a piece of fruit on the table/desk next to an artificial replica of that fruit. (If you are unable to find an artificial piece of fruit, roll up a piece of colored paper and ask the students to use their imaginations.) Ask **What is the difference between these pieces of fruit? Suppose they looked absolutely identical on the outside, what would be the difference? Why would Jesus use the image of fruit to talk about our relationship with God and behavior in life? How does this relate to the discussion of the Ten Commandments?**



Say **The problem with the Israelites who first received the Ten Commandments was that they never allowed the law to penetrate their hearts. The commandments were only inscribed on tablets of stone and never written on their hearts. In many ways we struggle with the same problem. We sometimes follow the rules on the outside without really being changed on the inside. You cannot take an artificial piece of fruit, stick it on a tree and expect it to grow. For it to grow, it must be attached to the tree and find its life-giving sustenance through abiding on the tree.**

Read John 15:5-8 again. Ask **What does this teach us about living the Ten Commandments? Practically speaking, how do we abide in Christ?**

Say **Jeremiah 18 deals with the need we have to be molded by God using the image of the potter and clay.** Ask a student to read Jeremiah 18:1-6. Point out that the potter took something that was imperfect and molded it into the best pot. God will do that for us if we allow God to work in our lives.

Give each student a small piece of play dough. Ask each student to mold a piece of fruit to represent his or her life. After a few minutes ask the students **Is God able to do this with you? Are you allowing him to form you into the person he wants you to be?** Before the class session, form a vine using wire and leaves available at a craft store. Fashion several wires where "fruit" can be attached to the bare ends. Invite the teens to place their play dough fruit on the vine as a symbol of their commitment to abide in Christ. After each student has placed his or her fruit on the vine, lead a prayer of commitment. If it is possible, you might want to leave the vine and fruit in the room for a few weeks as a visual reminder of the lesson.

## TAKE OUT

Say **The Israelites attempted to remember the commandments by attaching notes on the doorposts and little boxes strapped to their bodies. These physical reminders were an effort to keep the commandments in mind at all times.** Ask **What can we do to remember how we are to live?** After the students have shared their ideas, distribute a Ten Commandment card for each student. These are available at a Christian book store, or you could make your own using a computer. Encourage the students to put the card in a place where it will remind them of God's plan for life.

**The problem with the Israelites who first received the Ten Commandments was that they never allowed the law to penetrate their hearts. The commandments were only inscribed on tablets of stone and never written on their hearts. In many ways we struggle with the same problem.**

# God's Top 10 List

Write the Ten Commandments in the left column. Write at least one life application of each commandment in the right column.

## Table of Stone

## Tablet of My Heart

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	