

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Ten Commandments

Lesson 1	
Living Large	3
<i>Exodus 20:1-6</i>	
Lesson 2	
Taking God Seriously.....	8
<i>Exodus 20:7-11</i>	
Lesson 3	
Matters of Life and Death	13
<i>Exodus 20;12-13</i>	
Lesson 4	
Unrealistic Commandments?.....	18
<i>Exodus 20;14, 16</i>	
Lesson 5	
Being Happy with What You Have	23
<i>Exodus 20:15, 17</i>	

WHAT'S IN YOUR TEACHING GUIDE

This Teaching Guide has three purposes:

- to give the teacher tools for focusing on the content of the session in the Study Guide.
- to give the teacher additional Bible background information.
- to give the teacher variety and choice in preparation.

The Teaching Guide includes two major components: Teacher Helps and Teacher Options.

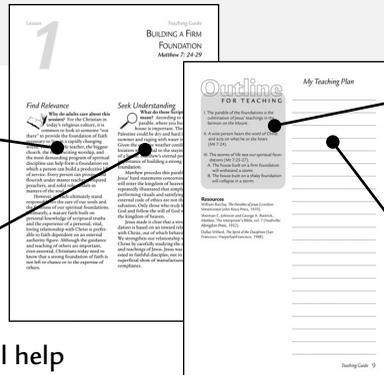
Teacher Helps

Find Relevance

helps you zero in on why each session is important for the adults you teach.

Seek Understanding

presents helpful Bible Background informations and insights that will help you better understand the Scripture.



Teaching Outline

provides you with an outline of the main themes in the Study Guide.

My Teaching Plan is a convenient place for you to make notes for teaching the session.

Teacher Options

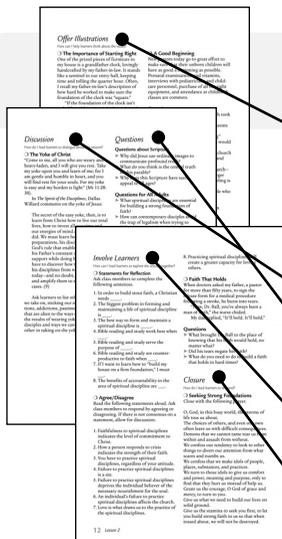
Offer Illustrations presents material that will help you paint a picture of the session. This section often presents items from church history, current events, or interesting anecdotes that help introduce the session.

Discussion provides teaching activities that will help learners discuss the Scripture text.

Questions presents multiple collections of questions for various kinds of adults.

Involve Learners helps learners become actively involved with the Scripture text for a particular session.

Closure gives you a means for wrapping up the session.



You Can Choose!

There is more material in each session than you can use, so choose the options from each section to tailor the session to the needs of your group.

Prepare Before the Session

Read the session for today in the Study Guide. Then read the options in this Teaching Guide, placing checkmarks beside the activities you plan to include. After you have decided which options to use, gather the appropriate materials.

LIVING

LARGE

Exodus 20:1-6

Find Relevance



Why do adults care about this session? As recent studies show, society is becoming increasingly individualistic. The need for community seems to be dwindling—and all in the name of individual rights and freedom. As a result, there is little respect for rules and authority. Generally, Americans view rules as restrictive, as we are taught to question authority if it gives even the appearance of infringing on our personal freedom.

This fierce individualism is evident in all aspects of our daily routine, but no place more clearly than our religious lives. Many of us grew up with a religion full of do's and don'ts; naturally, more times than not these lists took some of the joy out of life. We often felt that religion's sole purpose was to tell us what we could *not* do, certainly not to empower us with what we *could* do. To some of us, the sheer notion of using established "Commandments" as guidelines for our lives is frightening!

The Israelites, however, learned that the Ten Commandments were not restrictions on their lives. Rather, the Ten Commandments offered instructions on how to live in community with other people and in relationship with God. The list of tenets actually was liberating, each offering a sense of purpose and direction for the new nation. Is it possible that the

Ten Commandments will have a fresh word for us today?

Seek Understanding



What do these Scriptures mean? What do these Scriptures mean? The Hebrews had escaped from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses. After three months of journeying, they had arrived at the wilderness of Sinai. It was there that they camped at the foot of the mountain. God called Moses to the top of Mount Sinai and gave him the words that would serve as the very foundation for covenant life among the Hebrews. Central to this Sinai covenant were the stipulations that have become known as the Ten Commandments, or the Decalogue (literally, "ten words"). The Decalogue contained those principles that were to govern the relationship between Israel and the Lord. The first two commandments of the Decalogue called Israel into total allegiance and loyalty with God. These two commandments serve as the basis for all the others, for if we follow these, our ensuing relationship with God will also affect the ways in which we relate to each other.

Offer Illustrations

How can I help learners think about the issues?

○ Thou-Shalt-Nots

In *Smoke on the Mountain*, Joy Davidman tells the following story:

There is a tale told of a missionary in a dark corner of Africa where the men had a habit of filing their teeth to sharp points. He was hard at work trying to convert a native chief. Now the chief was very old, and the missionary was very Old Testament—his version of Christianity leaned heavily on thou-shalt-nots. The savage listened patiently.

“I do not understand,” he said at last. “You tell me that I must not take my neighbor’s wife.”

“That’s right,” said the missionary.

“Or his ivory, or his oxen.”

“Quite right.”

“And I must not dance the war dance and then ambush him on the trail and kill him.”

“Absolutely right!”

“But I cannot do any of these things!” said the savage regretfully. “I am too old. To be old and to be Christian, they are the same thing!” (13)

Questions

- Do you think many people can relate to the cannibal’s confusion, seeing Christianity as something old, rigid, and joyless?
- In what ways do we often turn Christianity into a religion based on thou-shalt-nots rather than on life-giving affirmations of God’s love for us?
- How can the Ten Commandments still be relevant to us today?

○ Finding Life in the Desert

For three months, the Jews had been traveling in the desert, where their journey took them into unknown territory.

Altogether uncertain of their future, they faced many dangers and perils. At the very least, life was uncomfortable. In *Experiencing God: Theology As Spirituality*, Kenneth Leech describes the “desert experience” this way:

Frequently [traveling] into the desert is linked with a turning-point in life.... The consciousness of one’s loneliness, the threat of meaninglessness and emptiness in life, the intensifying of doubt—these may propel a person towards a desert experience which may change the direction of his life. (160)

Questions

- How might the Hebrews’ experience in the desert have prepared them for a new relationship with God, along with a willingness to accept the conditions of the Ten Commandments?
- How might the notion of “covenant” have been a turning point for them?
- When have you experienced a similar turning point in your own life? How might you be different had you not been through the “desert”?

Discussion

How do I lead learners to dialogue about the session?

○ Distinctly the Ten Commandments

Many scholars have argued that the Ten Commandments are quite similar to the codes of conduct and political treaties of other civilizations in the ancient Near East. Other civilizations—like the Babylonians, Hittites, and Assyrians, to name a few—observed laws that prohibited such sins as stealing, lying, murder, and adultery, and they clearly spelled out the consequences of such behaviors through carefully constructed treatises.

Today, societies have legal codes that provide for contexts in which people have rights and privileges, and in which they are guaranteed protection under those laws. Those laws also stipulate which behaviors will be prohibited and the resulting punishments should those prohibitions be violated.

Questions

- So, it seems that all societies have laws. Although there might be similarities between the Ten Commandments and other legal codes, in what ways are the Ten Commandments unique from the laws of other societies?
- What is the meaning of “covenant,” and how is a covenant relationship different from other legal relationships?

Questions

Questions about Scripture

- Why do you think God refers to the Exodus story before giving Moses the content of the Decalogue?
- Some might contend that verse 3 implies the existence of other gods. What do *you* think?
- What are some idols that the Hebrews might have been tempted to worship?

Questions for All Adults

- What idols do you worship?
- What images do you have of God?
- Do those images limit or broaden your understanding of God?

Questions for Mature Adults

- How have the Ten Commandments served as ethical guides for your life?
- In a materialistic society such as ours, God seems to enjoy little priority. Have there been times when God was made even less of a priority?
- What lessons have you learned during those times when you placed material possessions or other relationships before God?

Questions for Younger Adults

- Are rules important in your life?
- Are those rules life-giving or restrictive?
- How difficult is it for you to give total allegiance to God?

Questions for Adults with Children

- How do you help your children learn the importance of obeying rules?
- How do you help your children learn to place their faith in God rather than in the things of this world?
- Do you give your children everything they want? Where do you draw the line?

Involve Learners

How can I lead learners to explore the session together?

○ God's Grace

In the preamble to the Ten Commandments, the Lord says, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt." The terms of the covenant were being set within the context of God's saving grace in the lives of the Hebrew people. God first showed grace, and only then did God give the Hebrews directions for their future.

It was important for the Hebrews to recognize God's acts of grace in their lives. Maybe we, too, need to be reminded of God's grace in our own lives. Having said this, pass around paper and pencils, asking your learners to complete the following sentence:

I am the Lord your God, who

_____.

Invite your participants to write as many examples as they can think of, describing specific instances of God's grace in their lives. After several minutes of brainstorming, allow volunteers to share their responses with the larger group.

○ A Futuristic Archeological Dig

Archeologists have remarked that excavated idols reveal much about the values of a particular civilization. Ask your adults to pretend they are a group of archeologists on a dig in the year AD 4000. Explaining that they are excavating at a location once known as "America," ask them to make a list of any ancient idols they could possibly unearth at this site. Record their responses on the board.

Questions

- What do these idols reveal about the values of the American people?
- Do these idols have anything to do with religion? Explain.

Closure

How do I lead learners to respond?

○ Ten Commandments Litany

Please note that the following litany will be used in the "Closure" option for each of the five sessions on the Ten Commandments. It will be expanded each week to include the commandments studied on that particular day. Print copies for your class and use the litany as a closing prayer to be read responsively.

Leader: I am your God; you shall have no other gods before me.

People: May our lives center on you and your will for us.

Leader: You shall not make for yourself any graven image.... You shall not bow down to them or serve them.

People: May we be clear that you cannot be captured and made to serve us, but that we can respond to your presence by serving you.

All: May your commandments free us to live in joy and hope. (Duck, 229)

2

TAKING GOD SERIOUSLY *Exodus 20:7-11*

Find Relevance



Why do adults care about this session? Unfortunately, the hectic pace of our daily lives often keeps us from thinking about God. This situation doesn't come as too much of a surprise, especially when we take into consideration that the average work week has expanded from 40 hours per week to 60 hours per week. Meanwhile, we dash from one meeting to the next as deadlines control our time schedules. We cart children from dance lessons to soccer games. We clean house, do the grocery shopping, and the list goes on and on. Then we measure our success and worth by how much work we have accomplished. Sadly, we place more emphasis on *quantity* rather than *quality*.

In the midst of all this activity, God is ignored, and yet we wonder why we have lost a sense of wonder and mystery. Most people devote little time to unhurried contemplation, but still we cannot figure out why we feel empty inside. Life is filled with countless tasks to be done, and the stress of it all wreaks havoc on our mental and emotional health. God calls us to set aside a time to rest, a time to replenish our spirits and our souls. In a word, keeping the Sabbath somehow helps us put the rest of our lives in perspective.

Seek Understanding



What do these Scriptures mean? During biblical times, a person's name was thought to sum up the very essence of that individual. To know another person's name was to know something about that person. This understanding was no less true of God. To know the name of God was aligned with actually *knowing* God. Thus, it was logical to expect a unique respect of the Lord's name among the Israelites. They took God's name very seriously!

God's name was a precious thing, and the way in which the Israelites talked about God also affected their relationship with God. Respecting God's name also influenced the people to respect and set aside time for God. By observing the Sabbath, the Israelites recognized that all time belonged to God, as did the whole of creation. Needless to say, time was a gift to be used wisely.

Offer Illustrations

How can I help learners think about the issues?

○ Misusing God's Name

In *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights*, Walter Harrelson includes several comments on the misuse of the Lord's name:

[T]he name of "The Lord," or "Yahweh," is clearly full of power, and its misuse must be protected against... Israel must not make religion into a club or weapon with which to have its way over others. Religion must not be a tool for frightening persons and groups to do the bidding of the religious authorities.

[T]he concentration upon joy and delight in the Lord and in life that has no roots or substance, upon the proclaiming of a love and forgiveness of God that knows no demands but only invites that most tricky of all religious summonses: to share life in the Spirit with "us." Authentic movements of the Spirit know the stern demands of the God of justice and know that the path of faith is one that takes its toll upon those who walk in it. Superficial invitations to "conversion" or to "renewal in the Spirit" are in their way just as dangerous as threats of eternal punishment upon the sinners whom one wishes to convert to one's particular brand of religious faith. And all are equally misuse of the power in the name of God. (64-65)

Questions

- How do our churches misuse the name of God?
- How would you describe the power of God's name?

○ Sabbaths

The following poem by Wendell Berry reflects his understanding about the importance of Sabbath rest:

Whatever is foreseen in joy
Must be lived out from day to day.
Vision held open in the dark
By our ten thousand days of work.
Harvest will fill the barn; for that
The hand must ache, the face must sweat.
And yet no leaf or grain is filled
By work of ours; the field is tilled
And left to grace. That we may reap,
Great work is done while we're asleep.
When we work well, a Sabbath mood
Rests on our day, and finds it good.
(Bass, 77)

Questions

- What do you think the poet meant by "a Sabbath mood"?
- What does this poem suggest about God's grace?

Discussion

How do I lead learners to dialogue about the session?

○ What Is Sabbath?

For observant Jews, Sabbath begins each Friday at sundown with the lighting of candles. It is a time of celebration when the best tableware and food are presented. People dress up and guests are invited to share in the meal. Traditional prayers of thanksgiving are recited, and many families sing and read together after the meal.

On the other hand, Christians connect Sabbath with Sunday. Sunday is the day set aside for persons to attend worship services. They dress up and enter their respective sanctuaries to sing praises to God, hear Scripture read, offer prayers, and give offerings of gratitude.

Questions

- What might Christians and Jews learn from each other about Sabbath?
- Besides church-going, what are some other ways in which we Christians might “keep the Sabbath”?

Questions

Questions about Scripture

- What exactly does it mean to use the Lord’s name “in vain”?
- The second part of Exodus 20:7 says, “The Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.” What does this mean?
- Why do you suppose the Lord set aside only one day for Sabbath rest?

Questions for All Adults

- In what ways do we dishonor the name of God?
- When do you experience real Sabbath?
- Is worship necessary for Sabbath?

Questions for Mature Adults

- What various names do you use to honor God?
- How do these various names express your understanding of God?
- Has observing the Sabbath played an important role in your spiritual life?

Questions for Younger Adults

- What activities cause you to need the most rest?
- What things would you have to say “no” to in order to say “yes” to keeping the Sabbath?
- In what ways do you intentionally “make time” for God?

Questions for Adults with Children

- Name-calling is a bad habit that children often learn. How do you help your child understand that name-calling is harmful to the self-esteem of others?
- How do you teach your children respect for others as well as respect for God?
- How do you encourage your children to look forward to church?

Involve Learners

How can I lead learners to explore the session together?

○ Time Inventory

Give each member of your group a pencil and paper, asking them to make a list of the five activities that require most of their time in a given week. Instruct them to rank these activities from the one that requires the most time to the one that requires the least.

Next, ask each of your participants to make a list of their top five relationships that require most of their attention in a given week. As with the first set of directions, ask them also to rank these from the one that requires the most attention to the one that requires the least.

When everyone has completed two lists, invite volunteers to share their finished products with the larger group.

Questions

- ▶ What from your lists surprises you?
- ▶ What do these two lists reveal about your priorities?
- ▶ How much time do you devote to God in comparison to your other relationships?
- ▶ Are there any activities you could let go of in order to make more time for Sabbath?

○ What's in a Name?

Distribute paper and pencils to your group members. Invite each person to write either the names of their own children, if applicable, or the names of children in their extended families (such as nieces or nephews). Then again, some might opt simply to note the names of children who have meant a lot to them (children they have taught or babysat).

Invite your learners to use a baby name book to look up the names they have listed and find their meanings. Allow volunteers to discuss the significance of children's names.

Questions

- ▶ How do parents decide on a child's name?
- ▶ Do you think a person's character is reflected in their name?
- ▶ How much time and care goes into choosing a name?
- ▶ What does this activity say to us about the importance of one's name?

Closure

How do I lead learners to respond?

○ Ten Commandments Litany

Leader: I am your God; you shall have no other gods before me.

People: May our lives center on you and your will for us.

Leader: You shall not make for yourself any graven image.... You shall not bow down to them or serve them.

People: May we be clear that you cannot be captured and made to serve us, but that we can respond to your presence by serving you.

Leader: You shall not take the name of your God in vain.

People: May we have respect for you and invite others to respect you.

Leader: Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

People: Keep us mindful of your creative power and help us to be refreshed to enjoy life fully.

All: May your commandments free us to live in joy and hope. (Duck, 229)

3

MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Exodus 20:12-13

Find Relevance



Why do adults care about this session? Psychiatrists tell us that our relationship with our parents often determines how we relate to other people. In fact, Erik Erikson, a doctor in the field of psychosocial development, says that whether basic needs are met in the first year of life can determine how a child relates to others in the future. Erikson believes that if parents are attentive to their children, the children will develop the capacity to trust their parents. And if children learn to trust their parents, then in turn, the groundwork is laid for them to trust and respect other persons and relationships throughout life.

Of course, psychiatrists also tell us that the converse is true. If a child's basic needs of love and care are not met, this situation sets the stage for future antisocial behavior. There is potential there for a child to develop feelings of mistrust, anger, jealousy, and disrespect. Many social workers and law enforcement officials tell us that the crime and murder rate among teenagers is in direct relation to the lack of a stable home life the offenders had as children. Inarguably, the role of parenting is important, so much in fact that its impact on our children will last a lifetime.

Seeking Understanding



What do these Scriptures mean? The fifth commandment, "Honor your father and your mother," serves as a bridge between the first four commandments and the last five. Whereas the first four commandments focus on the worth and worship of God, the last five commandments focus on the rights of other people. In the time of the Israelites, parents were seen as the vehicles through which God's divine concern and authority were exercised. So, to honor one's parents was also to honor God.

This commandment also includes a unique extension: "...that your days may be long." The Israelites believed that obeying this commandment would positively affect one's life. On the other hand, if the commandment was not obeyed, then equally negative effects on one's life were expected. If the commandment to honor one's parents serves as a basis for a healthy home life and a loving relationship with God, then it necessarily follows that in turn one will have respectful and loving regard for all life.

Offer Illustrations

How can I help learners think about the issues?

○ A “Grim” Fairy Tale

Joy Davidman tells the story of an elderly father who had to move in with his son and daughter-in-law:

His eyes blinked and his hands trembled; when he ate he clattered the silverware distressingly, missed his mouth with the spoon as often as not.... So she and her husband led the old man to the corner of the kitchen. There they set him on a stool and gave him his food in an earthenware bowl....

One day his hands trembled rather more than usual, and the earthenware bowl fell and broke.... So they made him a little wooden trough, and he got his meals in that....

One suppertime the young man noticed his four-year-old son playing intently with some bits of wood and asked what he was doing.

“I’m making a trough,” he said, smiling up for approval, “to feed you and Mamma out of when I get big”....

The man and his wife then took the little old man by the arm and led him back to the table. They sat him in a comfortable chair and gave him his food on a plate, and from then on nobody ever scolded when he clattered or spilled or broke things. (60-61)

Questions

- How would today’s society respond to the elderly father’s behavior?
- Do you agree with the point of this fairy tale: Honor your parents lest your own children dishonor you?
- Is dishonor a learned attitude?

○ Looking on Calvary

To be a nonviolent person is not easy. Everyone has to work on keeping control of their temper, especially when unjustly provoked. Clarence Jordan and the interracial communal experiment outside Americus, Georgia, known as Koinonia Farm, were often the recipients of verbal abuse, violence, discrimination, and the like. Jordan was not perfect.

On one occasion early in his ministry, an Americus resident and an opponent of Koinonia Farm wrote Jordan’s father and accused the younger Jordan of endangering his family because of the commune’s work with the Blacks in Sumter County. Jordan’s father had been in declining health, and the man’s letter upset him. Soon afterward Jordan happened to visit his father and was met with concerns and questions about the family. Jordan got so upset that he stormed out of his father’s house and drove back to Americus to confront his opponent. He entered the man’s office and said, “I try to follow Jesus, and he has taught me to love my enemies, but I don’t see how I can do that in this case.” Jordan then told the man that if he ever bothered his father again, he would “just have to ask Jesus to excuse me for about fifteen minutes while I beat you.”

Jordan’s career demonstrated a belief in nonviolence, however. He was especially critical of Christians who attempted to justify violence in the name of faith. To those who argued that the Old Testament provided the scriptural basis for a just use of violence, Jordan replied, “Any man who has looked on Calvary cannot live like he is looking on Sinai.” (Weaver, 315)

Discussion

How do I lead learners to dialogue about the session?

○ The Apple Doesn't Fall Far From the Tree

Most of us have heard the old adage, “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.” The familiar proverb suggests that who we become is directly related to the people who raised us. To discuss whether in fact, psychiatrists and sociologists assert that the connections between child and parent are so deep that our parents’ influence can hardly be overestimated.

Questions

- Do you agree or disagree with the statements noted above? Explain your answer.
- In what ways does our relationship with our parents shape who we are?
- In what ways does our relationship with our parents affect the way we treat other people?

Questions

Questions about Scripture

- Ancient Israel was a patriarchal society, but the fifth commandment awards father and mother equal honor. What might this imply about the role of the mother in ancient times?
- Do you think the commandment, “You shall not kill,” includes all of God’s creation? Discuss.
- What do you think is the appropriate application of “You shall not kill”?

Questions for All Adults

- Do “honor” and “obey” mean the same thing?
- What are some ways we can honor our parents?
- What do you think lies at the root of murder and violence?

Questions for Mature Adults

- Do you think our society has lost respect for its older generation? Explain.
- When you were raising your own children, what did you do to earn their respect?
- Over the course of your lifetime, the murder rate in society has been steadily rising. What do you think are the reasons for this?

Questions for Younger Adults

- Do you think children must always obey their parents?
- How do you show respect for authority figures?
- In what ways do we “kill” others with our words and thoughts?

Questions for Adults with Children

- Is respect something you feel you have to earn from your children, or is it something you demand from them?
- How do you instill in your children a sense of value for all life?

Involve Learners

How can I lead learners to explore the session together?

○ Dead Man Walking

Before the session, rent the movie *Dead Man Walking*. Show a segment to your adults that best demonstrates the nun's act of forgiveness toward the murderer on death row. After viewing the clip, ask your group members to discuss if forgiveness and reconciliation are possible in the face of violence and murder.

○ Possible Connections?

Remind your learners that when the sixth commandment was written, there was no elaboration on the many ways in which the commandment could or could not be applied. Remind the class of Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:21-25. Read the passage together and discuss its implications. Then ask your participants to discuss how the commandment, "Do not murder," may or may not speak to current issues in our culture. If you feel it is necessary, spark your discussion using questions like the following.

Questions

- Does the sixth commandment prohibit all forms of killing?
- In what specific ways do people in today's culture break the sixth commandment?

Closure

How do I lead learners to respond?

○ Ten Commandments Litany

Leader: I am your God; you shall have no other gods before me.

People: **May our lives center on you and your will for us.**

Leader: You shall not make for yourself any graven image.... You shall not bow down to them or serve them.

People: **May we be clear that you cannot be captured and made to serve us, but that we can respond to your presence by serving you.**

Leader: You shall not take the name of your God in vain.

People: **May we have respect for you and invite others to respect you.**

Leader: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

People: **Keep us mindful of your creative power and help us to be refreshed to enjoy life fully.**

Leader: Honor your father and your mother.

People: **Enable us to care for others as you have cared for us.**

Leader: You shall not kill.

People: **May we have reverence for life.**

All: **May your commandments free us to live in joy and hope.**
(Duck, 229)

UNREALISTIC COMMANDMENTS?

Exodus 20:14, 16

Find Relevance



Why do adults care about this session? It is rather difficult to argue with the assertion that our society encourages behavior that leads to adultery. After all, we are continuously fed a romantic lie—fostered by magazines, movies, and TV shows alike—alleging that passion is the real meaning of life, that its presence guarantees unending happiness and its absence means your marriage is over.

We hear that Viagra, sexy lingerie, buff bodies, and diets will make our marriages better. And, if not, we can always find passion elsewhere. Our society focuses almost exclusively on the physical aspects of marriage, devoting very little attention to the deeper values of fidelity, loyalty, honesty, and commitment. When these characteristics are not the core values within marital and family relationships, then it becomes even less likely that these qualities will take precedence with other life relationships and, ultimately, with God.

Seek Understanding



What do these Scriptures mean? The seventh and ninth commandments focus on one's relationships with other people. These commandments call for a commitment to truth in all of one's dealings, including spousal as well as neighborly.

Throughout the Old Testament, the language of adultery is used to describe Israel's disloyalty to God (Isa 57:1-13; Ezek 23:36-49). This usage demonstrates the seriousness of adulterous relationships. For the Israelites, adultery was not merely a crime against persons; it was also a sin against God. Adultery violated God's true intentions for creation, intentions linking a positive role for sexuality with commitment, honesty, and loyalty (Fretheim, 234).

Originally, the focus of the ninth commandment, "Thou shall not bear false witness," was on the giving of false testimony in legal proceedings (Ibid., 236). Eventually, this commandment was extended to include lying in general (Deut 5:20; Lev 19:16). So, false witness would include any slanderous or false words that might undermine another person's reputation. Lying about someone is not only damaging to their character, but it is also destructive to their well-being. Like adultery, lying is detrimental to the overall goodness of God's creation.

Offer Illustration

How can I help learners think about the issues?

○ Changing Times

Many years ago, actress Ingrid Bergman changed husbands mid-career and settled down to raise a family with her new spouse. Unfortunately, the legalities of divorce took longer than she expected, and before her first marriage legally ended, she discovered that she was pregnant with the child of her new lover. She did not deny the rumors; on the contrary, she even admitted the news publicly. As expected, a storm of condemnation resulted, spelling out the end of her movie career in America.

Years later, actress Meg Ryan began having difficulty in her own marriage and turned to another man for comfort and attention. This man happened to be her co-star in an upcoming movie. Before the legalities of her divorce were settled, she had already established a romantic relationship with her co-star. The story made great news for gossip columnists and entertainment magazines, but the public barely blinked an eye at the infidelity. Ms. Ryan is still considered one of the leading female stars in Hollywood.

Questions

- ▶ Have our attitudes about adultery softened in recent years?
- ▶ How does Hollywood affect our attitudes about adultery?
- ▶ Do we hold a different set of standards for people who live in the limelight?

○ A False Witness

Once, a pious man claimed his conscience made him reveal that he knew of a plot to overthrow the government. The man reported that the people plotting the takeover were from a minority group already unpopular with the local government. It was suspected that this fringe group was connected with a foreign

power, so the government readily believed the accusations. Certain politicians with particular axes to grind and others who wanted to discredit their opponents were first to accept the overthrow theory.

The pious man seemed to have a steel-trap memory. Every time he was questioned, he could remember new facts and names. No one was above suspicion, even government officials, and public hysteria seemed limitless.

Men began to eye their closest friends with suspicion and to look for revolution under the bed at night. The frenzy lasted for several years, during which hard-won civil liberties were cast aside, rules of evidence forgotten, slanders accepted as proof.

As it turned out, the man was Titus Oates, who in 1678 provided the information for what became known as the Popish Plot. The plot had English Protestants believing that their innocent Catholic neighbors were about to murder them.

Of course the seventeenth century was very crude and credulous compared to our enlightened times, in which nothing of the sort could possibly happen. But the seventeenth century had one virtue we should do well to remember. It detested a false witness, once it had caught him. Titus Oates, eventually convicted of his murderous perjuries, was whipped from one end of London to the other. (Davidman, 108-109)

Questions

- What are some other examples of entire groups of people being hurt because of the lies of only a few?
- When has the church participated in making false claims or telling half-truths?

Discussion

How do I lead learners to dialogue about the session?

○ The Marriage Vows

Bring with you to the session a copy of some traditional wedding vows and read them to the class. Your pastor will likely have a copy of some. Talk about how these vows are the basis of a marriage covenant between two people.

Questions

- How is a covenant different from a promise or an oath?
- What expectations are inherent in the keeping of a covenant?
- Why does society give so little acknowledgement to marriage as a covenant relationship?
- Why is it easier to “get out” of marriage today than it was 50 years ago?
- How does the notion of covenant help us to take seriously the institution of marriage and to remain loyal and honest in all our relationships?

Questions

Questions about Scripture

- How does the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery,” compare with Jesus’ teachings in Matthew 5:27-28?
- What might be the consequences of speaking falsely against another person?
- Likely, the ninth commandment was intended to insure that one told the truth in a lawsuit against a neighbor. In what other instances might this commandment be applied?

Questions for All Adults

- How might unfaithfulness in a marriage indicate the condition of one’s soul?
- Are adultery and lust the same thing?
- Is it wrong to tell a “little white lie”? If yes, then why do you think it is considered such acceptable behavior?

Questions for Mature Adults

- What do you think is the secret of a long, committed marriage?
- It has been said that without honesty, forgiveness and grace are not possible. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

Questions for Younger Adults

- Do you believe in “happily-ever-after”?
- Is honesty always the best policy?
- Is it okay to lie if you are never caught?

Questions for Adults with Children

- How do you and your spouse model a healthy marriage for your children?
- Psychiatrists say that human beings begin lying when they are very young. Why might this be the case?
- How do you deal with your children when they have been caught telling lies?

Involve Learners

How can I lead learners to explore the session together?

○ The Influence of the Media

Before the session, gather several newspapers, magazines, and/or music CDs that reflect current attitudes about love and relationships. Place the items on a table in your study area and allow ample time for class members to review them. After several minutes, encourage the group to discuss how popular culture shapes our personal attitudes about sex and marriage.

Questions

- What attitudes about marriage do you think young people are learning from our culture?
- Given what popular culture teaches, how can adults model and teach healthy attitudes about love, sex, and marriage?

○ Discerning the Truth

Before your meeting time, videotape 10-15 commercials. As you know, you will not have to watch much television to accomplish this task. However, you will need to arrange in advance to have a television and a VCR available in your room.

Tell your class that you will be refining some life skills today. The practice of speaking truthfully is a difficult task to master, especially in a world manipulated by advertisements and “spin doctors.” Discerning and speaking the truth requires wisdom and strength. To practice discerning the truth, play your homemade video of television commercials. Discuss each commercial by addressing the following questions.

Questions

- What is being sold, and to whom?
- What do you suspect this product will actually do?
- What testimony does this ad give about the values and priorities of our society?

Closure

How do I lead learners to respond?

○ Ten Commandments Litany

Leader: I am your God; you shall have no other gods before me.

People: **May our lives center on you and your will for us.**

Leader: You shall not make for yourself any graven image.... You shall not bow down to them or serve them.

People: **May we be clear that you cannot be captured and made to serve us, but that we can respond to your presence by serving you.**

Leader: You shall not take the name of your God in vain.

People: **May we have respect for you and invite others to respect you.**

Leader: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

People: **Keep us mindful of your creative power and help us to be refreshed to enjoy life fully.**

Leader: Honor your father and mother.

People: **Enable us to care for others as you have cared for us.**

Leader: You shall not kill.

People: **May we have reverence for life.**

Leader: You shall not commit adultery.

People: **May we be faithful to one another and the promises we make.**

Leader: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

People: **May our words be truthful and may they reflect honorably on others.**

All: **May your commandments free us to live in joy and hope. (Duck, 229)**

5

BEING HAPPY WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

Exodus 20:15, 17

Find Relevance



Why do adults care about this session? When we think about the eighth commandment, “You shall not steal,” we rarely consider that this one could actually apply to *us*. After all, we aren’t thieves or robbers or shoplifters; only *bad* people steal. Likewise, when we hear the tenth commandment, “You shall not covet,” we think someone else is doing the breaking—someone else who is envious, jealous, greedy, or gluttonous. We, of course, are able to keep our own desires intact.

However, in a society that insists more is better and that the “good life” is having expensive things, the temptation to acquire more is always nudging at our conscience. We *know* that material things will not make us happy, but if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that we often choose to fulfill our desires of wanting more and even wanting what other people have. Greed and envy can get the best of even the best of us.

Seek Understanding



What do these Scriptures mean? In interpreting the commandment, “You shall not steal,” it is important to note that the Israelites understood property as an extension of the “self,” as an extension of the owner. Therefore, stealing someone’s property or possessions was a violation of personhood, not just a mere violation of a person’s wealth.

In fact, this same understanding could be applied to the commandment, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.” The word “house” was inclusive of all that belonged to one’s neighbor, including property, wives, children, slaves, and animals. Since one’s property was considered an extension of one’s self, coveting a neighbor’s property was viewed as an all-out attack on that individual.

The Israelites, then, took this commandment one step further. They understood that coveting could be neither regulated nor clearly observed. Coveting was a matter of the heart, and since only God could observe the heart, this presence or absence of obedience was a reflection of one’s relationship with God. Consequently, to sin against one’s neighbor was also a sin against God.

Offer Illustrations

How can I help learners think about the issues?

○ The Damaging Effects of Theft

In his commentary on Exodus, Terence Fretheim offers the following perspective on stealing:

Theft is an attack on the dignity of human beings and their work. God dignifies human beings by giving them work to do, from which they can expect to receive some of the fruits of their labor. This is central to God's creational intentions for humankind (Gen 2:15-16). Theft is a refusal to accept this, and hence the humanity of both the thief and the victim is diminished. Moreover, human beings make use of God-given gifts in and through their work. For the thief not to consider these gifts and the blessings they bring is to treat with disdain what God has given. (236)

Questions

- What work has God given you to do?
- How are you using God's gifts to accomplish that work?
- How is stealing an "attack" on one's dignity?

○ Finding Balance

In *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights*, Walter Harrelson make this assertion:

It is all too evident that human beings are bent upon envy, covetousness, and an unwholesome desire to take up the goods of life that surround them, whether such goods will be good for them or not. Ours is an age in which the appetite for more and more seems almost impossible to assuage. We find it increasingly difficult to maintain any sense of balance regarding our use of food; gadgets for home, office, or auto; clothing; entertainments done in our behalf as we look on; or recreational goods and equipment. (153)

Questions

- What encourages your desire to want more?
- How can we learn to make distinctions between desiring that which is wholesome and good and desiring that which only feeds a hunger for more than we need?

Discussion

How do I lead learners to dialogue about the session?

○ The Heinz Delima

In Europe, a woman was near death from a rare disease. There was one drug the doctors thought might save her. It was a drug that a druggist in the town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, and the druggist was charging ten times what the drug had cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the materials and charged \$2000 for the prescription. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$1000, which was half of what he needed. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or to let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." (Belenky, 236)

Questions

- Should Heinz steal the drug? Why or why not?
- What other choices does Heinz have?
- Suppose Heinz does steal the drug and is caught and brought to trial. The jury finds him guilty and the judge has to decide on the sentence. What would be a fair sentence?

Questions

Questions about Scripture

- In ancient Israel, the punishment for stealing was to make restitution with the victim by repaying what had been stolen. Would this be a valid punishment for stealing today? Why or why not?
- How does coveting damage relationships?
- Is coveting as bad as stealing? Explain.

Questions for All Adults

- Is stealing ever justified?
- How are jealousy and envy harmful, even if never acted upon?
- Is it wrong to want more than what we have?

Questions for Mature Adults

- Robbery and theft have been on the rise in America for the last 20 years. What might be some reasons for this?
- How have you learned to be content with what you have?
- In what ways is it possible to steal without directly affecting one's property?

Questions for Younger Adults

- How does the media compel a desire for more?
- Is the quest for material things and financial security causing young adults to be "driven" in their work ethic?
- How will you know when you are content with what you have? When is enough enough?

Questions for Adults with Children

- Psychiatrists have said that teaching children to share at an early age may be a deterrent to feelings of jealousy and even to teenage crimes of robbery. How do you teach your children the importance of sharing with others?
- How do you teach your children that wanting something just because everyone else has it is not always satisfying?

Involve Learners

How can I lead learners to explore the session together?

○ A Word from the New Testament

Read Luke 12:22-34 aloud to your learners. As you are reading the passage, suggest that your class members imagine themselves in the reading. Allow five minutes for silent reflection before inviting each of them to share their thoughts to the following questions with a partner.

Questions

- With whom did you most identify: Jesus, the lilies, the sparrow, or the worrier to whom the passage is addressed?
- What is the good news in this passage for you?
- What did you learn about yourself in this passage?

○ What Are My Priorities?

Give pencils and paper to each of your adults, instructing them to divide the paper into three columns with the following headings:

Things I Want
Things I Need
Things I Already Have That I Could
Do Without

Under each heading, have your participants make a list of the items that apply. When class members have finished their lists, discuss the following questions.

Questions

- Which list was easiest to compile? Most difficult?
- Which list is longer?
- What do the lists reveal about your priorities?
- What do the lists reveal about your contentment and satisfaction with what you have?

Closure

How do I lead learners to respond?

○ Ten Commandments Litany

Leader: I am your God; you shall have no other gods before me.

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Leader: You shall not make for yourself any graven image.... You shall not bow down to them or serve them.

People: May we be clear that you cannot be captured and made to serve us, but that we can respond to your presence by serving you.

Leader: You shall not take the name of your God in vain.

People: May we have respect for you and invite others to respect you.

Leader: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

People: Keep us mindful of your creative power and help us to be refreshed to enjoy life fully.

Leader: Honor your father and your mother.

People: Enable us to care for others as you have cared for us.

Leader: You shall not kill.

People: May we have reverence for life.

Leader: You shall not commit adultery.

People: May we be faithful to one another and the promises we make.

Leader: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

People: May our words be truthful and may they reflect honorably on others.

Leader: You shall not steal.

People: May we have regard for the rights of others.

Leader: You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's.

People: May we enjoy the blessings we receive, and share them generously with others.

All: May your commandments free us to live with joy and hope. (Duck, 229)