

FALL 2020

LifeWay

# YOU

AFTER GOD'S  
OWN HEART:

A FRESH LOOK AT THE  
TEN COMMANDMENTS

+ + +

ALL IN:

A LIFE OF  
COMMITMENT



# GOD'S UNFAILING PROMISE

+ + +

We've messed up. You have. I have. We all have. And no matter how good our intentions or efforts are, we can't make up for the wrong we've done.

The Bible uses a much stronger word—sin—to describe how we have failed to live according to God's perfect standard (Rom. 3:23). The result of our sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

Thankfully, we do not have to stay in this condemned state. In spite of our sin and rebellion against God, He loves us and made a way for us to be forgiven and receive a new, eternal life, freed from the consequences of our sin. That way is Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty of our sin and brokenness with His own death (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). When we turn away from our sin in repentance and turn to Christ in faith, He gives us a new life, freed from the penalty of sin. We are made new in Him (2 Cor. 5:17).

God's unfailing promise—His commitment to us—is the best guarantee we can be offered. "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

To receive a new life in Christ, you can pray a prayer like this:

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross to forgive me of my sins and rose from the dead to give me new life. I'm sorry for all the wrong I've done and ask You to forgive me. I now accept Your gift of eternal life. Thank You for Your love, forgiveness, and a new life in Jesus Christ. From this day forward, I choose to follow You. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Share your decision to follow Jesus with a pastor or those in your Bible study group. Be baptized as an expression of your faith. Get involved in a church that will help you grow in your faith.

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# ON THE COVER

Singer-songwriter, Keesha, graces the cover of this issue of *YOU*. In her career, Keesha has shared the stage with top gospel artists on BET's *Bobby Jones Gospel*, The Word Network, and Impact Network. Baptized at an early age because of the influence of her God-loving family, Keesha has been in church all of her life. She affirms that her parents had a huge impact on her Christian walk. "They were spiritual guides that kept me on the straight and narrow," she says. Keesha grew up singing in the church choir, and recently embraced a calling into church leadership as minister of music. In addition, she and her brother are the sole caregivers for their mother who in recent years was diagnosed with dementia. Despite a demanding schedule, Keesha enjoys working out and playing volleyball. Currently, she sings both the United States and Canadian national anthems for the Nashville Predators ice hockey team. Her music is available digitally worldwide.



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## EDITORIAL

MARK CROSTON

It is always so exciting to receive something new. The new must be tried out, tried on, and explored—new clothes, a new gift, a new job, or even a new love. How about a new *YOU*? In 2 Corinthians 5:17 God lets us know He wants to make you new! “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” In fact, God is working to make everything new. Revelation 21:5 says, “Then the one seated on the throne said, ‘Look, I am making everything new.’” He also said, “Write, because these words are faithful and true.”

This quarter we are giving you a new *YOU*! We have a new style, a new pace, and a new look, but most of the same features that caused you to love *YOU* are still here. *YOU* is still a three-in-one resource: a Learner Guide; Daily Readings (now with five); and a Leader Guide. This quarter we are “All In” to be “After God’s Own Heart”! Try us out this quarter and please send me your feedback directly at [mark.croston@lifeway.com](mailto:mark.croston@lifeway.com).

Plan to join me at our Black Church Leadership and Family Conference, July 19-23, 2021, in Ridgecrest, North Carolina. Each year we plan something new to keep it fresh and to make it better every time. There is a full program for every member of the family! This is the place to bring your church leaders and their families to be edified, encouraged, and energized. Get all the details at [LifeWay.com/BlackChurchLife](http://LifeWay.com/BlackChurchLife). Now, grab your Bible and allow God to speak through *YOU*!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Mark A. Croston Sr.

National Director of Black Church Partnerships

[www.lifeway.com/BlackChurchLife](http://www.lifeway.com/BlackChurchLife)



# GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOU

*YOU* is a three-in-one learner and leader resource with inspirational and educational features to enhance Bible study that leads to spiritual maturity and life change. Here is information to help you get the most out of *YOU*.

## LEARNER PAGES

The first half of *YOU* includes pages for personal study. These should be read by the learner and leader prior to group time. Included in each session:

**Memory Verses** encourage filling the mind with the Word of God to strengthen every aspect of spiritual life.

**Digging Deeper** provides a deeper look at a word, character, or other aspect from the session.

**Did You Know?** provides an African-American or urban historical fact or update connected to the session.

## DAILY READINGS

Included with each session are five devotionals to be read by the learner and leader. The benefits of a daily devotion are innumerable. Their primary purpose in this resource is to focus attention on the biblical content of each session for application of and conformity to the Word of God.

## LEADER PAGES

The second half of *YOU* includes pages to guide teaching each session. Leaders can use the leader pages to guide learners through the passage and its key emphases as detailed on the learner pages. Here are suggestions on how to teach:

**Prior to the session, read and study the Bible passage, keywords, and learner pages.**

**Plan teaching using the leader pages. Keep in mind that because of time, it may not be possible to use every teaching suggestion. Also the teaching suggestions are in sequential order for easy use.**

**Features to use when teaching include: The Point, which is readily recognizable on the learner and leader pages; the question at the top of the first page of each learner session; Keywords on the Scripture pages; “Object Lessons”; “Digging Deeper”; “Did You Know?”; Pack Items\*; and Commentary at the end of each session on leader pages.**

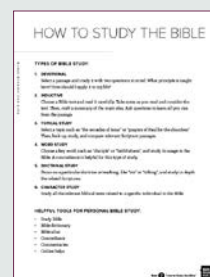
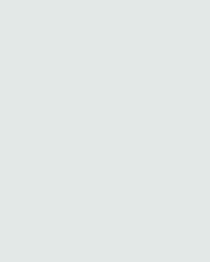
**Refine your teaching plans when necessary.**

## PRAY

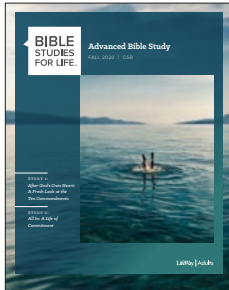
Because the Holy Spirit is the guide for your study, invite Him to show you how to “rightly divide the word of truth” as you teach your group. Read the Bible passage several times, asking the Holy Spirit to show you its meaning and application.

## \*PACK ITEMS

These are posters, charts, and handouts that can provide another layer to your teaching and add needed variety that makes learning more interesting. The *YOU* Leader Pack is located at [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com).



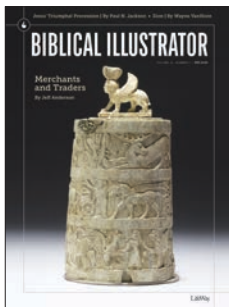
# FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO GO DEEPER



The **Advanced Bible Study** is written for group members who desire more extensive commentary. It includes exposition of each session's Scripture passage, an examination of keywords, an introduction to the setting of the passage and biblical life and times, questions to guide the study, and interactive responses to help readers apply God's truths to their lives today.



The **Herschel Hobbs Commentary** is designed specifically for leaders and provides a comprehensive exposition of each session's Scripture passage. Specific attention is called to items in the biblical text that readers would miss without a commentary. This commentary is based on the King James Version but interacts with all major English translations.



Each quarter, **Biblical Illustrator** offers in-depth background information on Bible customs, history, culture, archaeology, and word studies through vivid photography, engaging maps and graphics, and lesson-targeted articles. You can subscribe to *Biblical Illustrator* by going to [lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator) or by calling 1-800-458-2772. Forty additional articles (in PDF form) that support this quarter's Bible studies are available at [lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator).

# YOU **DISCIPLESHIP PLAN**

## THE PATHWAY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Growing in Christ is a journey—a lifelong journey—but what does that look like? LifeWay's research reveals eight signposts that indicate believers are on the discipleship pathway that leads to spiritual maturity. Each year, *YOU* engages all eight of these areas. Following this intentional plan for discipleship ensures progress on the pathway to becoming more like Christ.

Visit [BibleStudiesforLife.com](http://BibleStudiesforLife.com) for a fuller picture of this discipleship plan through 2022.

8 Signposts	Fall 2020	Winter 2020-21	Spring 2021	Summer 2021
<b>Build Relationships</b>	After God's Own Heart			
<b>Seek God</b>	All In: A Life of Commitment			
<b>Obey God and Deny Self</b>		When Emotions Rise		
<b>Engage with Scripture</b>		Spiritual Disciplines: Becoming More Like Jesus		
<b>Exercise Faith</b>			The Essentials of Christianity	
<b>Share Christ</b>			How to Share Christ	
<b>Live Unashamed</b>				Walking in Confidence
<b>Serve God and Others</b>				Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts



# STUDY 1 AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART:

## A FRESH LOOK AT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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### HOW THIS STUDY FITS YOUR DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

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#### **Build Relationships.**

We have no greater way to build good relationships than what we find in the Ten Commandments God provided. In the briefest and clearest of statements, God has revealed the way to relate to Him and others.

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### Writer Bio

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#### **Tony Evans**

wrote the learner pages. He is senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship and president of *The Urban Alternative*. He's been preaching for more than fifty years and can be heard on the radio broadcast, *The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans*. Learn more about Dr. Evans at [tonyevans.org](http://tonyevans.org).

#### **Marshelle Jackson Wilburn**

adapted the learner pages for the *YOU* audience. She is an inspirational speaker, author, leadership trainer, and urban missionary to the San Francisco Bay Area. She also partners in ministry with her husband, Port, in church planting and associational missions. They have five children.



## A BIBLE STUDY ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

+ + +

Morals and beliefs have become slanted in today's world. People want to live life on their own terms in a "YOLO" (you only live once) culture; therefore, we are encouraged to "do you," "get yours," and so much more that focuses on self-satisfaction and instant gratification. This way of life runs counter to God's desire for us.

Because God loves us and wants to be in relationship with us, He made sure that we have a direct and clear path to follow through the Ten Commandments. These commandments show us that God is intensely concerned with how we live. Unfortunately, too many people see these commandments as outdated or a negative list of don'ts, but obeying them leads to a rich and full life. Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments in two brief and powerful statements: (1) love God and (2) love others (Matt. 22:37-40). When our

lives are Christ-centered in love, we live out God's moral expectation for us. We live out the Ten Commandments.

King David knew this. He was identified as a "man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22), and he loved and valued the commands of God. This study encourages us to take a fresh look at the Ten Commandments through the life of David and his psalms. He gave us good examples of what happens when we follow the Ten Commandments, and examples of bad things that can happen when we don't.

God will never leave us on our own, trying to guess how to live life. Instead, He wants us to have a full understanding of His expectations and plans for our lives. Our well-being has always been one of His greatest concerns. That's important to know in this world in which we live.

## SESSION 1

# PLACE GOD FIRST

### THE POINT:

GOD IS TO HAVE FIRST  
PLACE IN EVERY  
ASPECT OF LIFE.

EXODUS /// 20:1-6;  
PSALM /// 16:1-4A, 9-11

Ex. 20:1 Then God spoke all these words: <sup>2</sup> I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery. <sup>3</sup> Do not have other gods besides me. <sup>4</sup> Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. <sup>5</sup> Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' iniquity, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands.

Ps. 16:1 Protect me, God, for I take refuge in you. <sup>2</sup> I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have nothing good besides you." <sup>3</sup> As for the holy people who are in the land, they are the noble ones. All my delight is in them. <sup>4a</sup> The sorrows of those who take another god for themselves will multiply.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices; my body also rests securely. <sup>10</sup> **For you will not abandon me to Sheol; you will not allow your faithful one to see decay.** <sup>11</sup> **You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures.**

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MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

**a: Sheol (Ps. 16:10)** – This is the abode of the dead (the underworld, "the pit," "the grave"), where it was believed everyone went after death. Even so, God is there (Ps. 139:8).

PLACE GOD FIRST + EXODUS 20:1-6; PSALM 16:1-4A, 9-11

## HOW CAN I PUT GOD FIRST IN MY LIFE?

Have you ever felt disappointed? Frustrated? Hurt? Confused? We all have. Life comes with issues—and these issues can show up in so many ways. When enough issues arise, life begins to feel like one big mess.

A man visited a doctor because his entire body hurt. From the top of his head to the bottom of his feet, he felt pain. Every single place he touched brought great pain to him. The doctor examined him and said, “I don’t see anything wrong.” He asked the man to touch different places on his body. But each time, he cried out in pain.

After a few minutes of this, the doctor diagnosed the problem. “Sir,” the doctor said, “You have a dislocated finger.”

While it felt like everything was wrong, it was only one thing. This can be true for our lives as well. Even though it may seem like everything in life is a mess, the solution comes down to three words: Put God first. This one action affects everything.

### God Alone Is God // Exodus 20:1-6

We put God first because He alone is God. This statement covers more than we realize. Some of us would say, “God is first,” but is He? For some people, what’s “first” in their lives is money, careers, pleasure, social media, sports, a person, or a special possession. When we give to anyone or anything the devotion, authority, and worship God alone deserves, the Bible describes that with one word: *idolatry*.

True, in our culture, we don’t bow down to wooden idols or statues. We don’t declare our devotion through rituals or sacrifice. Even though we don’t, it can be deceiving. Because we don’t physically bow to a person or a possession, we can blindly think they aren’t idols. The reality is, there are idols in our culture, and yet we mistakenly believe God is first in our lives.

God calls us to devote ourselves to Him first because He alone is God. In Him we find true life, both in this world and in eternity. As King,





He sits over all. He rules over all. He governs all. God's rules are rooted in love, and He calls us to love Him. Jesus summed up what our devotion to God looks like: Love God and love others (Mark 12:29-31).

### WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO PLACE GOD "FIRST" IN TODAY'S CULTURE?

To put God first means to live a life punctuated by a love which stems from a spirit of gratitude. Many who study the Ten Commandments skip the important opening verses of Exodus 20, when God first reminded the Israelites what He had done for them. "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery" (v. 2). He reminded the Israelites of the redemption and freedom He had provided. Their gratitude to God for what He had done would serve as their foundation for putting Him first. Their gratitude displayed what was in their hearts and their desire to put God first.

It is the same today. When God asks us to put Him first, He's asking for our hearts. If we give Him our hearts, He knows our actions will follow.

### WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF PUTTING OTHER THINGS BEFORE GOD?

## God Alone Is Good

// Psalm 16:1-4a

When David said he had "nothing good besides" God, he wasn't making a blanket statement that everything was terrible. Instead, he was focusing on an important truth: God alone is good and He is the originator of all that is good. Based on this truth, we know two things: Good has one source: God. And if something is not good, it doesn't come from God.

This doesn't mean that if something doesn't "seem" good, it doesn't come from God. A lot of things may not "seem" good to us, but God uses them to create good (Gen. 50:20). Yet Satan seeks different ways to use these seemingly bad things to plant doubt in our hearts concerning God's goodness.

**1. In trials or difficulties, Satan wants us to focus on the pain rather than the purpose.** Satan sought to confuse Paul by giving him a "thorn in the flesh" to torment him. Paul could have blamed God for the difficulty rather than looking to God in the midst of the difficulty. He could have turned His back on God, but Paul chose to look to God for wisdom in his

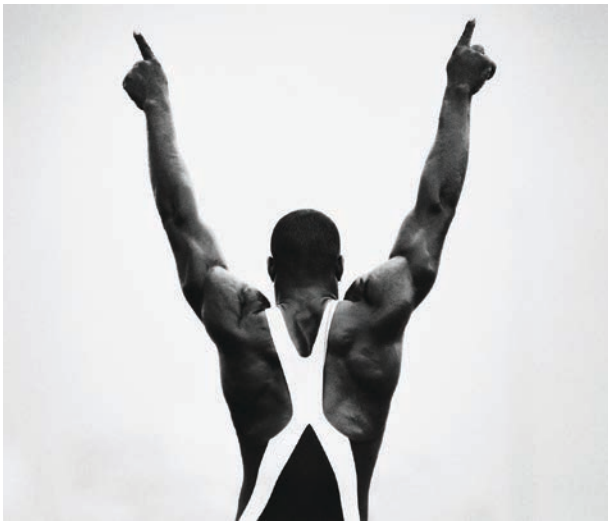


## DIGGING DEEPER

### THE DECALOGUE

Apart from Moses' citation of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) in Deuteronomy 5, the Old Testament gives little if any evidence of giving the Decalogue greater authority than any of the other Sinai laws. This does not mean these tablets were not treated as special. On the contrary, Moses notes the Decalogue contained the only revelation that was communicated by God directly to the people (Deut. 4:12-13; 5:22) and committed to writing on tablets of stone by God's own hand (Ex. 24:12; 31:18; 34:1; Deut. 4:13; 5:22; 10:1-4). All subsequent revelation at Sinai was communicated indirectly through Moses, the covenant mediator.<sup>1</sup>

**Why do you believe there was and is such a strong emphasis on teaching and learning the Ten Commandments?**



suffering. Paul received the good that God intended: the perfecting of his strength in weakness (2 Cor. 12:6-10).

**2. Satan causes doubts about the goodness of God by tempting us to develop a “victim mentality.”** Satan attempted this with Job by striking down and destroying all the people and things Job loved and cherished, and then wreaking havoc on his health. Yet Job remained firm, trusting in the goodness of God (42:1-6).

Like Paul and Job, our experiences may not always feel or seem good. But we’re assured all things will be used for good when we love God and put Him first (Rom. 8:28-29). This promise in Romans 8:28-29 is for those “who love God” and live “according to

His purpose.” Translation: It’s for those who put God first.

**WHAT EXPERIENCES IN YOUR LIFE REFLECT THE TRUTH THAT GOD IS GOOD?**

## God Alone Is the Way to Eternal Life

// Psalm 16:9-11

Most of us go through life feeling little need to know how to get where we’re going. Instead, we spend money on fancy apps to help us navigate through life like pros. Have you ever tried using your GPS in a area where road construction is taking place? You’ll quickly discover how important it truly is to know the way to where you are going. This also applies to where we’re going in our lives and for eternity. It’s important to know the way.

David knew “the path of life” was God Himself. God

showed him (and still shows us) the path of life on earth through His guidance, teachings, and directions.

God’s way is the only way which leads to both “abundant joy” in the present and “eternal pleasures” beyond time. Jesus described the importance of knowing the way and choosing God’s way when He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). He is our GPS.

When we remain in Jesus and align ourselves under Him (John 15:1-8), He takes us where we need to go. He calms the difficult seas in our lives. Eternal life is a gift we receive by placing faith alone in Christ alone for the payment of our sins. The good news of the gospel is that we don’t have to pay for any of it. Jesus is the way. He is the gift.



## THE POINT: GOD IS TO HAVE FIRST PLACE IN EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE.

Too many people think God should let them in heaven because they've kept the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were never given as an entry point for eternity. While it's true God expects us to obey His commands, the ultimate purpose of the law is to show us our inability to keep those laws. In other words, it reveals our need for a Savior (Rom. 7:7).

### WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THIS CLASS HAS HELPED YOU DISCOVER GOD'S PATH FOR YOUR LIFE?

God has allowed a permanent sacrifice—Jesus Christ—to substitute for the punishment each of us deserves. “He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). Does this mean we ignore and shun righteous living, as well as the commands of God? “Absolutely not!” (Romans 6:2). But it does mean we have been set free from legalism and condemnation through the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. This allows us to willingly and gratefully pursue a life pleasing to God by placing Him first over everything else.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The idea of God was at one time problematic in the African-American experience. The God who is Jesus was the God white Westerners introduced to the Gikuyu, Masai, and Wakamba people of East Africa. The problem? This God was believed to be responsible for the suffering of slavery. Also, He was not Ngai, who was the god of the African. They believed Ngai was god alone. When Ngai was stripped from the African culture, it left a terrifying darkness and void. But that was a long time ago. African-Americans have overcome this troubling experience, because many accepted the presentation of Christ and believe the one true God has delivered them from much suffering. According to Pew Research, today 83% of African-Americans are more likely to say they believe in God than other cultures.<sup>2</sup>

### WHAT IMPACT DOES THE HURTS OF OUR PAST HAVE ON OUR ABILITY TO PUT GOD FIRST?

## LIVE IT

### How will you actively seek to put God first in your life?

The starting point for any personal change begins with honestly acknowledging what needs to change. If there is any area in your life where you do not put God first, confess that to God. Then make a commitment to begin each day by putting God first. This will look different for each person, but it could mean simply saying a prayer or reading your Bible when you first wake up.

+ + +

- Make a new habit by listing one action you will replace to demonstrate your recommitment to put God first in your life.
- Identify three personal characteristics or habits which could lead someone observing your lifestyle to conclude that you place God first.
- Consider keeping a notepad or journal this week where you write down every time you sought to put God's perspective and His guidance first in your life.

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. DEVOTED TO YOU // EXODUS 20:1-2

What's your response to someone who displays devotion to you? Gratitude and appreciation are common responses. God displays His devotion to His people when He identifies Himself as belonging to them. Our acceptance of His devotion becomes apparent through our expressions of appreciation and obedience to Him. He deserves it. In many instances throughout Scripture, God displays faithfulness as our Protector, Provider, Healer, and so much more. We can trust a God who is devoted to us like that.

**Let us commit our hearts in sincere obedience to the ways of the one God who is devoted to us.**

## 2. NOTHING BUT GOODNESS // PSALM 16:2

It's challenging to find goodness with so much evil in the world. Daily news is filled with crime, death, terror, and hatred. So, where can we find goodness among so much distress? The answer is clearly God. There is no one good but God (Luke 18:19). The goodness of God is one of His attributes. This means God will always do what is true and what is right. Therefore, we can have confidence that none of the evils of the world is caused by Him. He will uphold us when those distresses encroach upon our lives.

**As you walk with God, look for His goodness to show up in your life every single minute of the day.**

## 3. FULL-NESS OF JOY // PSALM 16:11

Got Joy? It's easy to confuse joy with feeling happy because joy is often defined as happiness. The suffix "-ness" means a state of being. While it's OK to be in a state of happiness, it can be fleeting

because being happy is based entirely on circumstances. This verse provides another option. It reminds us that the abundance or full-NESS of joy is lasting and found only in the Lord.

**Therefore, focus on getting your joy from the One who provides it completely. God's joy is eternal.**

## 4. LAW AND ORDER // ROMANS 7:7

Have you ever been pulled over for a traffic stop? When we run a stop sign, the traffic laws convey we have disobeyed the local authorities. God's law acts the same way. Paul said, "I would not have known sin if it were not for the law." Without God's instructions, we would wander aimlessly through life, living as we please, with no regard for sin, for God, and His laws. Just as we avoid traffic infractions, even more so, we must avoid breaking God's law because He is the highest and greatest authority.

**Need help? Store God's laws in your heart so you can follow them and avoid sin (Ps. 119:11).**

## 5. FIRST THINGS FIRST // DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5

God made His desire for His people clear. He commanded that He be first in our lives. Jesus repeated this truth with more details in Mark 12:30. We are to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." Loving God is exemplified when we make His kingdom more important than anything else in our lives. This kind of love does not happen all at once. It's a day-to-day learning process.

**We must seek it, think about it, and learn about it on a daily basis. Soon His love will encompass everything we say and do.**

## SESSION 2

# HONOR GOD

### THE POINT:

OUR RELATIONSHIP  
WITH GOD IS SEEN IN  
HOW WE HONOR HIM.

EXODUS /// 20:7-11; PSALM /// 145:1-7

Ex. 20:7 Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name. <sup>8</sup>Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: <sup>9</sup>You are to labor six days and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female servant, your livestock, or the resident alien who is within your city gates. <sup>11</sup>For the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy.

Ps. 145:1 I exalt you, my God the King, and bless your name forever and ever.

<sup>2</sup> I will bless you every day; I will praise your name forever and ever

**<sup>3</sup> The LORD is great and is highly praised; his greatness is unsearchable.**

<sup>4</sup> One generation will declare your works to the next and will proclaim your mighty acts. <sup>5</sup> I will speak of your splendor and glorious majesty and your wondrous works. <sup>6</sup> They will proclaim the power of your awe-inspiring acts, and I will declare your greatness. <sup>7</sup> They will give a testimony of your great goodness and will joyfully sing of your righteousness.

MEMORY VERSE

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KEYWORDS

**a: Misuse the name of the LORD (Ex. 20:7)** – Literally, “rise up Yahweh’s name for no good.” Promising someone something by the name of God.

## WHAT ARE SPECIFIC WAYS TO HONOR GOD?

Most people know about honor and worship because we do it all the time.

Football fans show honor and worship through their conduct and commitment. A football game involves roughly seventeen minutes of actual action. When you remove huddles, getting back to the line of scrimmage, and other things that take place during the game, you're left with around seventeen minutes of actual plays.

Yet football fans willingly spend up to three hours watching a game that provides only seventeen minutes of action. If you actually go to the game, you need to add drive time, parking, and sitting in traffic gridlock. But have you ever heard football fans complain the game went too long? No, because when we love and honor something, we willingly commit our time to it.

Apply that heart attitude to our spiritual lives—church, personal Bible study, or prayer. Too many of us are satisfied with quick devotions and short prayers. The Ten Commandments reveal how to honor God, but do we do that?

### Honor God's Name // Exodus 20:7-11

Choose your favorite president—living or dead—and imagine he's coming to your house for dinner. You've gone all out by cooking a wonderful meal, setting the table, and even vacuuming the carpet. When the president arrives, what do you call him? Do you open the door and call him by his first name, or say, "Hey, what's up, \_\_\_\_\_?"

I doubt it. The position of president demands honor. When a role requires honor, we place a title in front of the name and speak the name with respect.

Too often, even believers refer to God—the Creator of the universe and the Sustainer of life—with dishonor. They refer to Him using clichés like "the big guy" or "the man upstairs" or throw out phrases such as "Oh, my God!" and "Jesus Christ!" In the Model Prayer, Christ taught us we're to honor (hallow) God's name (Matt. 6:9). The term "hallowed" comes from the same root word we get the word "holy."



It means to be “set apart” or “sanctified.” His name is unique and holy because God is unique and holy.

After all, God is the One who spoke the world into existence in six days. On the seventh day, God rested, not because He was tired. He rested because He had finished what He set out to do. He wanted to enjoy and experience His creation. Likewise, He calls us to set aside one day a week to rest and honor Him.

When we honor God for who He is, God opens the floodgates of His provision. We honor God because He deserves it; yet, in His grace He returns favor to us.

“How great is your goodness that you have stored up for those who fear you and accomplished in the sight of everyone for those who take refuge in you” (Ps. 31:19).

#### **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS PEOPLE DISHONOR OR MAKE LIGHT OF GOD’S NAME?**

We’re not to “misuse” God’s name in any way. The misuse of God’s name is often interpreted as vulgarity, but we can also dishonor God through our actions and lifestyles. If we live in disobedience to Him, we dishonor His name.

#### **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS PEOPLE CAN HONOR OR GIVE WEIGHT TO GOD’S NAME?**

### **Honor God Through Worship // Psalm 145:1-3**

“Every day.” Those two words stand out in verses 1-3. David praised God and declared he would bless God every day. Not just on the good days. Not just on the days when he felt like dancing and singing in the streets. Not just on the victory days. No, David wrote about his heart’s desire to worship God every day and praise His name forever and ever.

Do you desire to worship God every day? Or is your worship limited to Sunday morning? Or on those days when you get a good report at work, or receive a blessing, or have a nice vacation somewhere? If your heart doesn’t reflect David’s heart, then your worship is “sometimey,” basically inconsistent. It’s based on circumstances and convenience. That’s not worship; that’s emotion.

#### **WHAT ARE SOME OBSTACLES THAT GET IN THE WAY OF OUR WORSHIP OF GOD DAILY?**

American families cook a lot of turkeys and hams at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Careful attention to getting



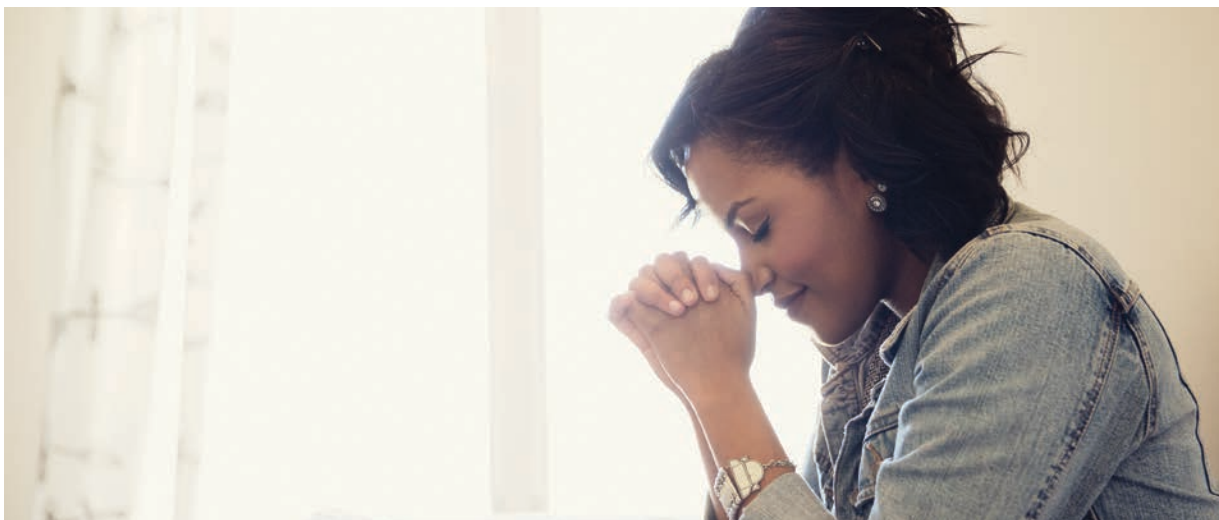
### **DIGGING DEEPER**

#### **GOD’S NAME**

The commandment, “Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God,” is followed by a threat of punishment for those who disobey it. The misuse of God’s name appears to be invoking His name to vouch for something or someone. Examples would include “God may strike me down if I don’t keep my promise.” The most basic idea behind this commandment is to prevent lying about God. The name of God signifies His essence. To speak God’s name was to recognize His awesome power and holiness. Jesus reinforced this commandment with regard to making false promises, using God’s name (Matt. 5:13-37; 23:16-22).

**Why do you believe people, even Christians, carelessly use the name of God today?**





the meat just right is important and includes using a thermometer to know when the meat is perfectly done.

Eating uncooked meat can be harmful. A ham or turkey can appear to be perfectly cooked on the outside and yet remain raw on the inside. A meat thermometer is important and necessary to determine the true state of what is inside.

Kingdom disciples are no different. We can look great on the outside but be a spiritual mess on the inside.

God holds the thermometer; He knows the state of each of our souls. He may keep you in an oven of trials and challenges, because He desires to shape and sharpen you during those tough times. Choose to honor Him with your worship in good times and bad. Learn to trust God

despite the reality of where we are on a given day. As David chose, we need to worship Him every day.

#### WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO BLESS THE LORD EACH DAY?

### Honor God Through Actions // Psalm 145:4-7

David's heart for God shines through in these verses. He wrote of honoring God's great works and great goodness, while singing joyfully of God's righteousness. We live in an age when honoring God takes second place to many people's desires to honor themselves. People often try to present a perfect image and identity on social media, but it's faulty and deceptive, and it replaces focusing on God's greatness and goodness. If David's words were in sync with today's cultural values,

the word "your" would be replaced with "my." We would be on the throne of praise instead of God.

- One generation will declare (my) works to the next and proclaim (my) mighty acts.
- I will declare (my) greatness.
- They will give a testimony of (my) great goodness.

Anytime we shift the focus from God and His rightful position and place it on ourselves, we have failed to honor God. This is like the church at Ephesus, "I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first" (Rev. 2:4).

To be sure, the Ephesian church had a lot going on. The Lord assured them that they were doing many things right. However, they had neglected



one thing: Put God first and honor and love Him over everything else.

The issue at Ephesus wasn't that they no longer loved God at all. It was that He was no longer their priority—even though they were doing many good works for the kingdom of God. To honor God with our testimony and actions, we must not only love God, but we must love Him first.

So, how do we recognize when first love has turned to second love—or worse—in our lives? One way is when performance for God becomes an end in itself. In those moments, we have lost our first love like when:

- We spend time in daily devotions just to check it off our list.
- Our testimony and actions paint us as more prominent than God.

When we reflect on all God has done, we're drawn to true worship. We'll want to honor Him with lives that serve as "a testimony of your great goodness."

**WHAT HAVE PREVIOUS GENERATIONS  
TAUGHT YOU ABOUT HONORING GOD?**

DID YOU KNOW?

The names of God had great meaning in the lives of African-American enslaved. In African traditional religion, African religio-cultural roots were often combined with biblical belief. This gave expression to ways of worship and names of God. For example, "Olodumare" Meant "God, the Omnipotent." It is the same name El Shaddai in Genesis 49:25. These names helped slaves understand that God, not masters, was ultimately in charge of human history. So when African-Americans sing the gospel song, "God knows how much we can bear," they are singing about a God who will see and understand what they are going through (Gen. 16:13) and make the load lighter (2 Cor. 10:13). Because He is all-knowing, they believe in the end God will say well done to those who are misunderstood.<sup>3</sup>

**IN WHAT WAYS IS HONORING GOD  
UNIQUELY IMPORTANT IN THE LIVES  
OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS?**

## LIVE IT

### How can you honor God daily?

To honor God means to give Him the respect, praise, glory, adoration, and obedience He so richly deserves. Forced honor and forced worship are neither honor nor worship. But as you begin to reflect daily on God's greatness and God's goodness, honor and worship of Him will flow naturally out of your heart.

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- Confess to God any times you misused His name and failed to honor Him with your life. Journaling helps. It is a great way of releasing thoughts on your heart and mind.
- If you're on social media, post and share God-honoring posts this week.
- Consider sharing with someone in your day how great God is and the great and wonderful blessings He has provided in your life.

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. WHAT'S IN A NAME? // EXODUS 20:7

Has anyone ever called you by another name? If meant in a derogatory manner, it does not feel good. A person's name becomes attached to his or her character, and that is even more so with God. Because God is holy, His name is holy. When we fail to honor the name of God, we fail to identify Him properly, show others His value, or give to Him the credit He is rightly due. Honoring God begins with trusting that He alone is God.

**That trust will lead us to worship His name and strive to do everything to the glory of His name.**

## 2. REMEMBER REST // EXODUS 20:8-11

Two common expressed sentiments, "There aren't enough hours in the day," and "If I only had more time." Making these statements can wrongly imply that God, the Author of time, has His time calculations off. However, more realistically, we probably have more on our plates than we can handle, or we haven't prioritized our time sufficiently. God created the whole of creation in six days and then, on the seventh day, He rested. This was not because He needed to, but because He just stopped. His action gave people a time pattern to follow. Unlike God, we need to rest and should make it a priority among our many obligations of life. Don't worry about the work left behind when you rest.

**You can trust God will see your work through to completion. Just obey His command and take time to rest.**

## 3. BLESS THE LORD // PSALM 145:1-2

God has given His children many blessings, because He wants us to be happy and experience fulfillment. But what does it mean when we bless

the Lord? It means from the depths of our souls, we acknowledge the Lord and His goodness. In the Book of Psalms, David encouraged the people to bless the Lord by praising, exalting, and worshiping Him. God is glorified when we bless Him. Think in terms of what it means to you to be blessed. You receive favor, goodness, honor, and overall well-being. We have the privilege of providing that same blessing to God.

**What an awesome privilege to honor the One who loves us unconditionally in such a way.**

## 4. TELL SOMEBODY // PSALM 145:4-7

Do you remember when you first heard about God and His goodness? Someone probably shared a personal experience. Believers honor and glorify God when they tell others about the difference God has made in their lives. Our personal experiences are often the best headlines for God's good news. These stories spin a never-ending cycle of truth. From generation to generation, the story of God has been told and will continue to live on.

**What chapter does your life add to His story?**

## 5. HONOR ROLL // PSALM 112:1-2

The honor roll. Do you remember this list of students in school? Those listed received recognition for academic achievement. God has an honor roll as well. It's for those who trust, worship, and honor Him through their decision to live for Him. Not only are we given honor, but our descendants will be blessed because of the legacy we leave behind.

**As a believer on God's honor roll, make a daily effort to maintain a close walk with Him.**

## SESSION 3

# HONOR PARENTS

### THE POINT:

HONOR FOR PARENTS  
IS SEEN IN OUR  
WORDS AND ACTIONS.

EXODUS /// 20:12;  
2 SAMUEL /// 15:7-14

### MEMORY VERSE

Ex. 20:12 **Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.**

<sup>2</sup> Sam. 15:7 When four years had passed, Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go to Hebron to fulfill a vow I made to the LORD. <sup>8</sup> For your servant made a vow when I lived in Geshur of Aram, saying: If the LORD really brings me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in Hebron." <sup>9</sup> "Go in peace," the king said to him. So he went to Hebron. <sup>10</sup> Then Absalom sent agents throughout the tribes of Israel with this message: "When you hear the sound of the ram's horn, you are to say, 'Absalom has become king in Hebron!'" <sup>11</sup> Two hundred men from Jerusalem went with Absalom. They had been invited and were going innocently, for they did not know the whole situation. <sup>12</sup> While he was offering the sacrifices, Absalom sent for David's adviser Ahithophel the Gilonite, from his city of Giloh. So the conspiracy grew strong, and the people supporting Absalom continued to increase.

<sup>13</sup> Then an informer came to David and reported, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." <sup>14</sup> David said to all the servants with him in Jerusalem, "Get up. We have to flee, or we will not escape from Absalom! Leave quickly, or he will overtake us quickly, heap disaster on us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."

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### KEYWORDS

**a: Long life (Ex. 20:12)** – There is not a promise here for individually long life spans. Rather, the promise refers to God's protection of His people if they obeyed His command.



## HOW CAN WE SHOW OUR PARENTS WE CARE ABOUT THEM?

A testimony from Tony Evans:

My mom and dad made it abundantly clear when I was growing up that if I misbehaved at school, there would be consequences at home. My dad, especially, cut no slack when it came to breaking the rules at school or anywhere else. In fact, my father “ruined” many a Saturday night during my youth: as I went out the front door, he’d say, “When you are out there tonight, remember that your last name is Evans.”

Obviously, I knew my name; he didn’t need to remind me. But he was reminding me my name represented something bigger than just me. Our family’s name stood for honesty, integrity, morality, and dignity in the community. In short, it represented a commitment to Christian living, and my dad didn’t want me to do anything to jeopardize the testimony of that name.

That reminder stayed in my mind as I made youthful choices. I sought to honor my dad and the value he taught me to put in our name. I wanted to honor the name he had given me.

### Honor Through Respect //

**Exodus 20:12**

What is “honor”? The Greek word for honor means “to value highly, to hold in highest regard.” This, by the way, holds true at any age. There may be disagreement regarding the age when children are no longer required to obey their parents, but children never reach an age when they don’t owe their parents honor.

#### WHAT ARE SOME WAYS WE SHOW HONOR TO PARENTS?

God made it abundantly clear that honor and respect are critical elements in every home. God is serious about honoring parents because God understands the whole picture. He knows it is not simply about having a good day or a peaceful home; honor is tied to advancing His kingdom on earth.

Today it’s common to blame your problems and behaviors on parents. It’s reminiscent of two brothers who went through a counseling

session together. They had grown up in a home with an alcoholic father. One of the brothers had also become an alcoholic, but the other drank no alcohol at all. When asked to explain their behavior, they said in unison, “Well, what else could you expect with a father like mine?”

Both men told the truth: One followed in his father’s destructive footsteps, even though he probably had professed he never would do so, but the other stuck to his resolve not to end up like his dad. The story is a reminder that parents sometimes get blamed for far too much—and receive praise for far too little.

So how can we show honor? Here are three categories:

- 1. Emotional Honor.** By spending time with them and showing genuine concern and love. You’re not expected to honor the wrong your parents do, but you are expected to honor their position as parents.
- 2. Verbal Honor.** As adult children, we are to show respect to our parents. It should not be, “Hey, Vincent. How’s it going?” It should be, “Yes, sir” and “No, sir.” Whether a parent is right or wrong, we’re still to speak respectfully. As Paul told Timothy, “Don’t

rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father” (1 Tim. 5:1). We’re to speak to and about our parents, honorably.

### **3. Financial Honor.** In

1 Timothy 5:8, Paul wrote, “If anyone does not provide for his own family, especially for his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” Honoring our parents includes a financial responsibility for them when they can’t take care of themselves.

### **WHAT ARE WAYS OUR CULTURE SHOWS DISHONOR TO PARENTS?**

### **Honor Through Truth // 2 Samuel 15:7-12**

To further understand honoring parents, the tragic story of Absalom provides an example of what not to do.

Absalom was David’s third son, born to him through his fourth wife, Maacah of Geshur, daughter of King Talmai, ruler of a small Aramean city-state (2 Sam. 3:3). This marriage was probably rooted in pursuit of political gain rather than attraction or love. In fact, almost all of David’s marriages were based on political power, causing jealousy among his family members.



## **DIGGING DEEPER**

### **DAVID AND ABSALOM**

According to the Bible, Absalom was the third son of King David. The name Absalom means father of peace; however, he did not live up to his name. Instead, Absalom murdered his brother Amnon because his brother had disgraced his sister Tamar. This created a rift between David and his son Absalom that lasted a couple of years. To reconnect his son, David gave Absalom permission to return home, but he would not face his son. Finally, after two years of trying, Absalom got an audience with his father. However, this one meeting would not heal a wound that had festered in David’s heart for five years. Absalom rebelled and decided to usurp his father’s throne. But Absalom was killed by one of David’s soldiers, Joab.

**Whom do you think should be responsible for reconciliation between parents and children? Why?**





David was far from a perfect husband and he wasn't an upstanding father either. For example, his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 11) contributed to rebellion in his sons, particularly Absalom. Indeed, David's sins unleashed a whole series of consequences on his family. When Nathan the prophet told David a story highlighting David's sins, David said the offender should pay back the debt fourfold (12:1-7). Sadly, David declared his own sentence as four of his own children would die.

1. The baby David created with Bathsheba died (v. 18).
2. David's son Absalom killed his brother Amnon after Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar (13:28-29).
3. Absalom rebelled against his father David and was killed by Joab (18:9-15).
4. Years later, David's son

Solomon had his older brother, Adonijah, killed because he tried to take over as king (1 Kings 2:22-25).

David's sin with Bathsheba left a legacy of destruction. His sinful behavior didn't excuse Absalom's behavior. Absalom was responsible for honoring David as both his father and king, but he honored himself at his father's expense.

#### HOW DID YOUR DESIRE TO HONOR YOUR PARENTS IMPACT YOUR DECISIONS?

We cannot honor our parents without truthfulness and integrity in how we talk to them or about them. Absalom's negative example showed the tragic consequences of failure to show honor with integrity, bringing great adversity home to the nation of Israel—and death to himself.

## Honor Through Honor //

### 2 Samuel 15:13-14

Absalom's move to become king appeared to be working. He was popular, and one of David's men reported to him, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." Had this been an election, it would've meant David would have to step down and let Absalom take the office he won by the people's vote. But defeat in that culture meant death. David rightfully feared for his life and the lives of his people in Absalom's rebellion. Absalom had no concern for his father's welfare, only his own.

Another example in Scripture showing how God feels about dishonor is the story about a group of young men who cursed the prophet Elisha.



“As he was walking up the path, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, chanting, ‘Go up, baldy! Go up, baldy!’ He turned around, looked at them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the children” (2 Kings 2:23-24).

These weren’t little kids being childish. These boys were cursing God’s prophet, and their disrespect brought their death. Many children are dying spiritually, emotionally, and relationally today because they’ve never learned the importance of honor. It’s costing their lives.

Absalom’s dishonor of David cost him his life. His rebellious pursuit to dethrone his father left him dead at Joab’s hand (2 Sam. 18:14-15).

Dishonor has a way of recycling itself throughout our relationships, which is why it’s so critical for us to always show integrity and honesty. Yet, when we do sin, we must seek God and His mercy given to us by God’s grace through the blood of Jesus Christ.

What if our own parents were hard to honor? If they left a legacy of destruction, bitterness,

or any number of things, we must seek to trust Scripture in which God calls us to forgive and honor them.

### WHOM DO YOU KNOW THAT MODELS THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP IN A WAY THAT HONORS GOD?

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Enslaved parents passed on lessons of loyalty; messages about how to treat people; and stories of family genealogy to their children. The following true story provides an example: One day, when his father and his mistress had happened to call young Willie at the same time, he hesitated, not sure which had the strongest claim on his obedience. He finally went to his mistress. When his father scolded him for it, he said, “You both called me, and I didn’t know which to go to.” His father said, “You are my child, and when I call you, you should come immediately, if you have to pass through fire and water.”<sup>4</sup>

### WHAT MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THE PARENT AND CHILD RELATIONSHIPS OF SLAVES?

## LIVE IT

### How will you daily seek to honor parents?

No matter what family history you have been given, choose the path of love, respect, and honor from this day forward. God gave us parents because through them, He instills the godliness and integrity we need to live in community on earth. The love and patience of parents exemplifies the love and patience of our heavenly Father. For that alone they should be honored.

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- Apologize for any sins of dishonor or anything done that made it difficult for your children to honor you. When you do, you are modeling truthfulness and integrity for your children, your grandchildren, and the children of others.
- This week do something to help your parents or support them with a letter or card. Even if your parents are not alive, you can honor them by how you talk about them.

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. BLESSINGS IN HONOR // EXODUS 20:12

The very first relational command God gave dealt with honoring our parents. This establishes the family as an essential building block of society. If unrest persists in our homes, the very fabric of our society is ripped apart. We can see proof of this every day. Honor in homes must persist because this command extends from generation to generation. What we do today establishes future blessings for our descendants. This command is not only for children but every living person should honor those who raised them.

**We are to respect, honor, and care for those who gave us life and sacrificially cared for us.**

## 2. HONORABLE RETURN // EPHESIANS 6:2-4

What comes to mind when you hear the word obey, as in “obey your parents”? Submit? In this passage, it means more than submission. It means to acknowledge the authority of someone. The seriousness of this command is communicated through the promise received when it is obeyed—“so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land.” An honorable return in the form of a promise that deals with the length of our lives should motivate us to obey without question.

**Even so, we should always remember that God’s commands are for our good, whether with or without a promise.**

## 3. RIGHT HONOR // 2 SAMUEL 15:5-6

Have you ever given someone honor without sincerity because you stood to gain something for yourself? That was Absalom’s plan. He wanted the people to think of him as king, rather than his father David. In these verses, Absalom stole the hearts of

the people by a simple kiss to their hand. But the honor he received was short lived. It’s not uncommon to pay someone a mindless compliment even when we don’t really believe they deserve it. God desires that His people extend love and compassion to each other.

**Therefore, be mindful to honor others with a sincere heart of love.**

## 4. LIVE HONOR // DEUTERONOMY 6:4-8

God expects honor to be a way of life for us. This was declared in the Shema, which He gave the Israelites. The Shema was the essence of God’s covenant with His people. It was to be deeply ingrained in the heart and mind, then put into action. This means honor isn’t like clothing we take off and put on. God intended for it to be part our being, character, and identity.

**How can we live lives of honor? It begins with loving the Lord our God, extending love to others, and living obediently according to His commands.**

## 5. HONOR OVER TRADITION // MARK 7:6B-13

The purpose of God’s laws is to guide us in right living. Sometimes people can take this to the extreme in their pursuit of holiness and “religion.” Jesus accused the Pharisees of “abandoning the command of God” while keeping “human tradition.” They made their oral traditions more important than God’s law. Though they may seem right and serve a purpose, God isn’t impressed with our traditions. He expects our obedience to Him and His Word.

**We should be sure our motives honor God rather than be motivated by man-made rituals or traditions.**



## AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

MARK CROSTON

I can remember the excitement I felt as a growing Christian in my teenage years. Memorizing key Scriptures; learning how to share my faith; being challenged to teach the Word of God and more. I wanted to grow to be a man after God's own heart. Unfortunately, times would come when I would be reminded of my humanity and I would find that sins I thought I had outgrown would still visit my life from time to time. They would cause me to wonder—Am I still saved? Does God still love me? Can God still use me?

So what does it mean to live a life after God's own heart? Does it mean we are perfect? Does

it mean that we just rigidly and routinely execute the commandments of the Bible? Does it mean we have never sinned? Is this a very high and special title that only a select few can achieve? Or is it something we can all strive for despite our imperfections?

I have always been encouraged in times like this by the life of David. Most people who have been around the church know that David was not a perfect person. We may not remember he was the youngest son of Jesse, a shepherd, a soldier, or even a sovereign king. But most people who know of David know he had an affair with a woman named

Bathsheba. What amazes and encourages me about David is that, though a failure in our eyes, God still called him a man after His own heart.

In 1 Samuel 13:13-14, Samuel said to Saul, "You have been foolish. You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you. It was at this time that the LORD would have permanently established your reign over Israel, but now your reign will not endure. The LORD has found a man after his own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over his people, because you have not done what the LORD commanded."

Two things here. One is that David is declared a man after God's own heart while he was a boy and even before he was anointed king over Israel. In addition, maybe surprisingly, after his affair and fall with Bathsheba, the Bible says it again. Acts 13:22 tells us "After removing him, he raised up David as their king and testified about him: 'I have found David the son of Jesse to be a man after my own heart, who will carry out all my will.' "

The second interesting thing is that Saul was also a failure, but the judge/prophet/priest Samuel tells Saul that if he had kept God's command "the Lord would have permanently established your reign over Israel . . . but now your reign will not endure."

So what's the difference? Why is David a man after God's own heart and Saul discharged? The difference is not the nature of their sin. Sometimes we have a tendency to play the big sin, little sin game, and we declare your sin is the big sin and our sin the little sin. Be reminded that 1 John 5:17 says, "All unrighteousness is sin," so one sin does not condemn us before God any more or less than the other.

The difference is in the hearts of the sinners. Saul was arrogant; David was humble. Saul made excuses for his sin; David ultimately was repentant and asked forgiveness for his sin. In Psalm 51:4,7, David prays, "Against you—you alone—I have sinned and done this evil in your sight. So you are right when you pass sentence; you are blameless when you judge . . . Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."



It was David's heart submission to God that made the difference. It is not the style of the sin, it's the sincerity of the surrender. First John 1:9 reminds us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It takes a heart of humility and love to be a person after God's heart. David confessed, and God forgave.

We, too, can be people after God's own heart if our love for Him is so strong that it will not allow the separation sin brings to last long. It takes a heart of humility and love; a willingness to admit and confess our sins; and a desire for God's favor and fellowship to be a person after God's heart. There is hope for all of us who have a passion for God and are willing to walk close to Him in loving submission.

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## SESSION 4

# HONOR LIFE

### THE POINT:

RESPECT HUMAN LIFE  
AS GOD DOES.

EXODUS /// 20:13;  
1 SAMUEL /// 26:7-11, 22-25

#### MEMORY VERSE

Ex. 20:13 **Do not murder.**

<sup>1</sup> Sam. 26:7 That night, David and Abishai came to the troops, and Saul was lying there asleep in the inner circle of the camp with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. Abner and the troops were lying around him. <sup>8</sup> Then Abishai said to David, “Today God has delivered your enemy to you. Let me thrust the spear through him into the ground just once. I won’t have to strike him twice!” <sup>9</sup> But David said to Abishai, “Don’t destroy him, for who can lift a hand against the LORD’s anointed and be innocent?” <sup>10</sup> David added, “As the LORD lives, the LORD will certainly strike him down: either his day will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. <sup>11</sup> However, because of the LORD, I will never lift my hand against the LORD’s anointed. Instead, take the spear and the water jug by his head, and let’s go.”

<sup>1</sup> Sam. 26:22 David answered, “Here is the king’s spear; have one of the young men come over and get it. <sup>23</sup> The LORD will repay every man for his righteousness and his loyalty. I wasn’t willing to lift my hand against the LORD’s anointed, even though the LORD handed you over to me today. <sup>24</sup> Just as I considered your life valuable today, so may the LORD consider my life valuable and rescue me from all trouble.” <sup>25</sup> Saul said to him, “You are blessed, my son David. You will certainly do great things and will also prevail.” Then David went on his way, and Saul returned home.

#### KEYWORDS

**a: Murder (Ex. 20:13)** – Putting to death improperly, for selfish reasons rather than with authorization (as killing in the administration of justice or in a holy war).



## WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU SHOW OTHERS THAT YOU VALUE THEM?

Ask anyone with little knowledge of what the Bible teaches, and he's likely to mention one of the Ten Commandments, especially the one about killing. You may have seen a TV courtroom drama where someone shouted at the accused murderer, "Thou shalt not kill!" Or perhaps the defense lawyer used it as a reason not to put the condemned person to death.

It's almost universally accepted that killing others is wrong, but cultures and governments legislate different ways to interpret that. Life—

and the value of life—has been a major topic in recent years. Whether discussing late-term abortions, rights issues of euthanasia, or human-trafficking, life is demanding to be noticed and defended.

The Bible is clear: life begins at the moment of conception and retains its value from the womb to the tomb. *All life*. Unfortunately, believers within the body of Christ have not always agreed on this, and we have failed to unify on this all-important area. But God wants us to realize that all life is valuable. We are to see life as He sees life.

### Value What God Values //

**Exodus 20:13**

Human life is precious to God—and should be precious to us. Yet we often give in to the lie that just because we don't take part in actual, physical murder ourselves, we're above this three-word command: "Do not murder."

#### WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS FOR SOCIETY WHEN WE VALUE HUMAN LIFE?

Jesus made it clear in His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount that murder can take other forms. We also aren't to destroy another's life through hate or insult.

"You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister, will be subject to the court. Whoever says, 'You fool!' will be subject to hellfire" (Matt. 5:21-22).





Hatred and insult typically come rooted in bitterness and unforgiveness. Allowing these two things to grow and worsen in our lives produces the damaging stench of death. It not only affects others around us in many ways but can also lead to our own spiritual and emotional death.

Christ has called us to live a life of love. He said, "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another" (John 13:34). Anytime you and I live absent of love for one another, we are living in disobedience to God's highest command.

Yet, love becomes difficult to give or experience in the stench of unforgiveness. The ability to forgive is about more than forgiving the person who hurt you, or even forgiving yourself for what you now regret. It's also about regaining the life God intended for you. All human life is precious—*including your own*. When you choose bitterness and unforgiveness, you're also hurting yourself.

To release any hatred and bitterness, look to the cross and what Jesus did for you. Jesus died to forgive you, but He also died for the ones you're tempted to murder with hate.

## Accept God Is in Control //

1 Samuel 26:7-11

Although Saul was king, it was clear that God's hand was on David and he would become king. Saul not only stood in the way of David's rightful rise to the throne, but he'd also made it his mission to keep David from becoming king. Several years before this time, while David was in the palace with the king, "Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear. As the spear struck the wall, David eluded Saul, ran away, and escaped that night" (1 Sam. 19:10). David escaped into the surrounding country, but Saul chased after him.

Now on this night, as Saul and his three thousand men slept, David was nearby. Circumstances were in David's favor; here was an opportunity to easily kill Saul. Based on Saul's actions against David, many people wouldn't have blamed David. It would be an act of war or self-defense: "Kill or be killed."

But David knew to lift a hand against the Lord's anointed would leave a stain of bloodshed and guilt on his own life. So, David chose instead to take the spear and the water jug by Saul's head



## DIGGING DEEPER

ABISHAI

Abishai was David's nephew and one of the bravest of David's mighty men. He continually demonstrated loyalty and faithfulness to his royal uncle. He commanded one of the three divisions of David's army at the battle with Absalom (2 Sam. 18:2,5,12). He slew the Philistine giant Ishbi-benob, who threatened David's life (2 Sam. 21:15-17). On one occasion he withstood three hundred men, and slew them with his own spear (2 Sam. 23:18). Abishai believed God had delivered their enemy Saul into their hands and requested the honor of killing David's enemy for him, offering to pin Saul "to the ground with one thrust of my spear." But David denied him the opportunity to touch God's anointed.

**What do you believe would have been the impact on David's reign had he killed Saul this way?**

to let Saul know how easily he could have killed him.

### WHAT DO DAVID'S WORDS AND ACTIONS REVEAL ABOUT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

Life is sacred. No one has the right to take a life other than the Creator of life Himself: God. It's also because we are made in the image of God.

God made an important statement to Noah, revealing life's sacredness and value: "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, for God made humans in his image" (Gen. 9:6). The willful shedding of human blood is murder. The reason murder is wrong isn't just because it's an attack on another person; it's also an attack on God.

Humanity was made in God's image. To attack or destroy humanity is to declare war on

God. It assaults the epitome of His creation.

### HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THE TRUTH THAT GOD IS THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY OVER ALL LIFE?

As kingdom disciples, we shouldn't be at ease in a world where life continues to be degraded and destroyed. We're called to speak up for the lives of others—including the helpless and most vulnerable—in any and every way that we can.

### Treat Others with Value // 1 Samuel 26:22-25

Every life bears the stamp of God. We've spoiled that image through sinfulness, but His image is stamped in every human being. This truth ought to direct how we view and treat ourselves and others. We're to respect life

by treating every life as equally valuable. David modeled this with Saul.

Cancer is one of the devastating diseases of our day. Cancer is the formation of abnormal cells that want to take from the body, but they don't want to contribute to it because they want to grow. They also want to spread and move into other parts of the body causing the whole body to suffer and be in trouble.

Cancer exists in the body of Christ as well. There are "cells" of people in the church who want the benefits for their own lives without contributing to the rest of the body. Believers around the world face major religious persecution. Thousands die annually for their beliefs in Christ. Moreover, according to the Guttmacher Institute, an estimated 56 million humans



die every year through abortion. The devaluing of life and our ignoring this reality is a cancer spreading through the body of Christ.

David displayed an attitude that valued life. Throughout much of his life, David modeled words the prophet Micah spoke centuries later: “Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the LORD requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6:8). Consider how we can live this truth as David did:

1. To act justly toward the innocent and vulnerable and to seek to protect their lives.
2. To love faithfulness by pursuing life and freedom for those who are at risk of losing both.
3. To walk humbly means we “consider others as more important than” ourselves (Phil. 2:3).

When we do these three things, we will both honor and value life as God intended for us to do. We will also position ourselves for blessings and rewards.

**WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL WAYS WE CAN LIFT UP THE VALUE OF LIFE BEFORE OTHERS?**

#### DID YOU KNOW?

The apostle Paul noted that governments are established by God and authorized by Him to use “the sword” (Rom. 13:4). However, the government can be motivated by the times to use their authority to do harm as was the case about one hundred years ago in Elaine, Arkansas. On October 2, 1919, hundreds of black citizens were killed during what has become known as America’s worst racial massacre. Black men, women, and children were murdered, some burned alive by U.S. troops and vigilantes. The violence was instigated when white planters had sought to prevent black planters from organizing a union to receive a fair price for their crops. Paul’s admonition, “Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice” (Eph. 4:31) should guide the hearts African-Americans to value the lives of others rather than retaliate.

**WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE TODAY TO LIVE UNSCATHED BY THE DEVALUING OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN LIVES IN THE PAST?**

## LIVE IT

### **How will you actively show value to all life?**

The Bible is clear: life begins at the moment of conception and retains its value from the womb to the tomb. Unfortunately, believers within the body of Christ have not always agreed on this, and we have failed to unify on this all-important area. But God wants us to realize that all life is valuable. We’re called to see all people as God does.

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- If you privately consider some people more important than others, confess to God and ask forgiveness.
- Take time to examine how you devalue life through words you speak to or about others. Words of anger, hatred, or bitterness don’t honor the lives of those God loves.
- Find real ways you can affirm the value of life within your circles of influence.

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. DIVINE DON'TS // EXODUS 20:13

Though God's laws are thought of as a list of don'ts, they actually should be viewed as the opposite. They should be seen in the light of being protected from missing out on the fullness of God's presence and blessings. Anything to which God has said *no* or *don't* prevents separation from Him and His blessings. Because of God's majesty, purity, and holiness, He cannot tolerate sin. Therefore, a dilemma arises because we are not holy. God's law resolves that issue.

**Our obedience to the laws of God forms our relationship with Him and positions us to be recipients of His blessings.**

## 2. HEART MATTERS // MATTHEW 5:21-22

Most of us can say we haven't committed murder; however, many of are still guilty of committing murder in our hearts because we have violated God's command to love. Jesus dealt with this command, saying, "everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment." Anger in this verse refers to a seething bitterness against someone. It is a dangerous emotion that can spiral and impact our spirit so that we are not pleasing to God. Seeds of bitterness create harvests of hatred.

**We must look to Jesus to hew out bitterness from our hearts.**

## 3. RISE ABOVE // 1 SAMUEL 26:11

At some point in life, each of us will experience a time when we feel we've been wronged. We can seek payback for the wrong, but if we do, consider two things. First, God knows what has happened and has allowed the insult or opposition. Second, He's got a better way of dealing with it than you ever could. Because of God, you can rise above

these things and move forward without hate or revenge.

**Just trust God and ask Him to strengthen you to release any desire for revenge to His will and His way.**

## 4. CONSIDERABLE HONOR // 1 SAMUEL 26:24

David didn't always do things right; however, this verse shows one of the reasons God said David was a man after His own heart. David had the opportunity to take matters into his own hands with Saul. Instead, he chose to honor God by not harming Saul. Because of this he had every right to request that God would honor him because he had honored Saul, but he did not. This was an exhibition of godly character, which is often rewarded with the blessings of God.

**In wisdom, consider honor for others more essential than honor for yourself.**

## 5. FEAST ON HUMBLE PIE // PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

Have you ever heard of "humble pie"? To eat humble pie describes the act of making a major mistake and having to own up to it. Some believe humility requires putting oneself down. However, the implication in these verses is that humility can build up. We have great worth because of who we are in Christ. But we should lay aside any thoughts of exalting ourselves and treat others with common courtesy and respect. We should feast on God's humble pie. When we consider the interests of others more important than our own, we imitate Christ who was the true example of humility.

**Let us follow Christ in humility so that He will be glorified through our lives.**

## SESSION 5

# HONOR MARRIAGE

### THE POINT:

PHYSICAL INTIMACY IS  
RESERVED FOR ONE MAN  
AND WOMAN WITHIN THE  
COVENANT OF MARRIAGE.

EXODUS /// 20:14; 2 SAMUEL /// 11:1-5

#### MEMORY VERSE

Ex. 20:14 **Do not commit adultery.**

<sup>2</sup> Sam. 11:1 In the spring when kings march out to war, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah, but David remained in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> One evening David got up from his bed and strolled around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing—a very beautiful woman. <sup>3</sup> So David sent someone to inquire about her, and he said, “Isn’t this Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hethite?” <sup>4</sup> David sent messengers to get her, and when she came to him, he slept with her. Now she had just been purifying herself from her uncleanness. Afterward, she returned home. <sup>5</sup> The woman conceived and sent word to inform David: “I am pregnant.”

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#### KEYWORDS

**a: Adultery (Ex. 20:14)** – The breaking of wedlock. Whatever defiles the body is just as serious as whatever destroys it. Jesus applied this commandment to what pollutes our imagination (Matt. 5:27-28).



## HOW CAN COUPLES HONOR GOD THROUGH THEIR RELATIONSHIP?

Weddings these days come in all sizes and shapes. For many, a wedding is a quiet, simple ceremony, while others spare no expense to create an experience their friends and family will long remember. Regardless of the trappings, weddings share one thing in common: union. Two additional words can be used to describe a solid marriage.

- 1. Discontinuity.** When a man and woman get married, they break ties with their immediate family before the wedding.
- 2. Continuity.** The couple continues this institution called family with the same principle as the one from which they have disconnected.

God calls this union a covenant. The nature of a covenant is spiritually binding and is especially important in marriage. God made His standard clear in the Ten Commandments. Obedience to God's commandment carries God's blessing, but as we see in the life of David, failing to honor God's standard of marriage brings devastating consequences.

### Be Faithful // Exodus 20:14

The commandment against adultery in marriage is a critical one. We're to protect our marriages. Adultery breaks trust and destroys the oneness God desires and has designed for marriage.

### HOW WOULD YOU SUMMARIZE OUR CULTURE'S VIEW OF ADULTERY?

Within the physical intimacy of marriage, God has designed us so that chemical bonds serve a greater purpose than pleasure. They create and seal ties of commitment, attraction, and protection based on various hormones.

Adultery damages marital attachments. Then the married couple must rebuild what it lost to restore oneness. Affairs also create new chemical bonds outside of the marriage covenant leaving lasting scars, cravings, and even withdrawal symptoms for months or years.

Adultery—physical or emotional—does more damage than breaking trust through betrayal in a marriage. Scientific data has shown that



withdrawal effects from a temporary love interest are as severe, if not even more severe, as those from any drug.<sup>5</sup>

Science confirms this, but God says something similar. When Paul wrote, “Don’t you know that anyone joined to a prostitute is one body with her?” (1 Cor. 6:16). He used the Greek word *kollao*, which literally means “to glue together, cement.” Sexual intimacy releases chemicals designed to bond; these brain-imprinting hormones glue two individuals together.

When a person ends an affair, physiological reactions occur in the brain, like when stopping any addictive behavior. Anytime a person stops an addictive behavior without addressing it emotionally and spiritually through repentance, forgiveness, healing, and the empowerment of Christ, they have a higher chance of relapse. That is why Scripture counsels us to “guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life” (Prov. 4:23).

We guard our hearts because it’s where sin first takes root. Jesus, focusing on the heart said, “You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already

committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:27-28). While the commandment focused on the act, Jesus zeroed in on the heart motivating the act.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR A SOCIETY FOLLOWING GOD’S STANDARDS FOR PURITY AND FAITHFULNESS IN MARRIAGE?

### Guard Your Thoughts //

2 Samuel 11:1-3a

David’s life is an example of what happens when faithfulness and purity don’t guard our thoughts. As soon as David chose to ask about the woman he saw bathing on the rooftop, he had already begun pursuit. In that situation, guarding his mind would’ve meant turning away when he first saw her. Instead, David chose to pursue her, which led to devastation of many lives.

If we don’t guard ourselves, we share intimate knowledge about ourselves which is only meant for our spouse. Sexual intimacy is first mentioned in Genesis 4:1: “The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain.” The original term translated *was intimate* is the Hebrew word *yada*, referring to knowing or revealing something. While *yada* doesn’t



## DIGGING DEEPER

### TEMPTATION TO LUST

People respond to temptation in a variety of ways. Centuries earlier Joseph, a trusted slave in Egypt, was tending to his affairs when he was aggressively tempted by his master’s wife. But rather than giving in to temptation, Joseph ran from it (Gen. 39:7-12). In contrast, David was walking and looking around on his roof when he was tempted by Bathsheba, who was unknown to him at the time, taking a bath. But instead of running from the temptation, David moved toward it. His action reflected more than just an innocent query; it signaled an impulsive desire. He disregarded the Torah’s prohibition (cf. Ex. 20:14; Lev 18:20; Deut. 5:18) and the fact that the penalty for adultery was death (cf. Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22).

**Why do you think David lacked the strength to resist the temptation to commit adultery?**



refer to sexual intimacy, its meaning points to an intimate knowledge. It's clear sexual intimacy is about more than physical activity and pleasure. The word *yada* infers diving into another person's reality in order to know deeply and be deeply known.

The word is also used about knowing God through personal interaction with Him:

- “The secret counsel of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he *reveals* his covenant to them” (Ps. 25:14).
- “You are my witnesses”—this is the LORD's declaration—“and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may *know* and believe me and understand that I am he” (Isa. 43:10).
- “I will give you the treasures of darkness

and riches from secret places, so that you may *know* that I am the LORD” (Isa. 45:3).

God desires intimacy in our relationship with Him. Because marriage reflects our union with Christ (Eph. 5:22-32), the same purity and faithfulness shown in that relationship is expected with a spouse.

#### WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL WAYS WE CAN FOLLOW GOD'S COMMAND TO BE FAITHFUL AND PURE?

### Watch Out for Others //

#### 2 Samuel 11:3b-5

David set aside faithfulness in his own life and failed to honor Bathsheba's marriage. David's servant reminded him of Bathsheba's own marriage and tried to

warn him of the danger in his pursuit. He reminded David that Bathsheba was someone's daughter and wife. But David chose self-satisfaction regardless of the consequences.

We can argue David wasn't in love with Bathsheba; he only lusted after her.

1. If David truly loved Bathsheba, he would never have sought to violate her own marriage vows and union. Love isn't selfish or self-seeking (1 Cor. 13:5).
2. We learned sexual union in marriage is to have an intimate knowledge that seeks to know deeply and to be deeply known. But the Hebrew word for know, *yada*, isn't used in verse 4. Instead, it is another Hebrew word *shakab*, translated as: “he slept with her” that is used.

While these two Hebrew terms are used to refer to sexuality, *shakab* doesn't include the sacredness of the union and removes the main purposes of sexuality: special bonding for knowing and being known. Anytime the word is used in the Old Testament for sexual relations, it refers to wrong behavior.

- Lot's daughters slept with their father (Gen. 19:32-35).
- Shechem defiled Dinah (Gen. 34:2-7).
- Reuben slept with his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22).
- Amnon raped Tamar (2 Sam. 13:11-14).

Unfortunately, this can happen within marriage if couples don't bond emotionally and spiritually through a loving, giving, and honoring relationship. The word *shakab* is used in the case of Jacob and Leah, because he didn't love his wife (Gen. 30:16). Their marriage may have produced seven children, but it also produced pain and conflict.

When sex is self-seeking, it brings many emotional, physical, and spiritual consequences. Guarding marriage from adultery starts by creating a true connection of love, honor, and

romance between both spouses and nurturing the love-relationship. Honoring marriage produces lives that are pleasing to God and brings us the greatest satisfaction and joy.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Last year D. W. Williams, 103, and his wife, Willie Williams, 100, celebrated 82 years of marriage. The couple met in Newberry, S.C., in 1935, and they were married two years later. They won the longest running marriage contest in their state in 2014. D. W. and Willie have accomplished quite a feat to remain married so long because black marriages struggle to last mainly due to socioeconomic factors. The couple attributes the secret to their lasting black love to trusting God, listening to country western music, working crossword puzzles, talking things out, and just being nice to one another. <sup>6</sup>

#### WHAT ARE SOME WAYS OUR GROUP CAN ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT COUPLES IN THEIR MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP?

## LIVE IT

### How will you honor marriage?

God made His standard about relationships between a man and a woman clear in the Ten Commandments. Obedience to God's commandment carries God's blessing, but as we see in the life of David, failing to honor God's standard of marriage brings devastating consequences. God calls marriage a covenant, and the nature of a covenant is spiritually binding.

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- Adultery begins in the heart. Reject any lust or inappropriate feelings toward others.
- If you're guilty of adultery (emotionally or physically) in the past or present, repent fully before God. Turn your heart toward obedience to Christ.
- Seek ways to honor your and others' marriage.



# DAILY READINGS

## 1. ONENESS KEEPER // EXODUS 20:14

In the realm of marriage, a man and woman live in oneness. Spouses should commit to be oneness keepers, individually and as a couple working to maintain purity and faithfulness. Because marriage standards in today's culture have been infiltrated by sin, the work of oneness keeping needs the inclusion of God as one of the strings in the union. Without God, a marriage will more often than not succumb to the temptations that drive a husband and wife apart.

**Choose to live out the covenant of marriage as a oneness keeper who honors the marriage standards set by God.**

## 2. DESIRABLE DESIRES // MATTHEW 5:27-28

Desire is defined as a strong hunger for something for enjoyment or satisfaction. Our desires come from God and are part of our human nature, but they can lead us out of God's will when they are selfishly motivated. This selfishness originates in the heart. Jesus carefully explained the sin that takes place in the heart is just as real as the act of doing it, especially as it relates to the sin of adultery.

**Therefore, our primary concern as a man and woman in marriage should be to align our hearts with what God says is desirable.**

## 3. SET THE RECORD // HEBREWS 13:4

The seventh commandment makes clear that God requires sexual purity, which is in contrast to the unfaithfulness and promiscuity generally practiced and even sanctioned in today's culture. Because marriage is ordained by God, it has a beauty all its own. But there is a mix-up. People are embarrassed by a display of affection between a married couple, yet few blink when the sexual activities

of those who aren't married are on display. We, as God's people, need to set the record straight. Though the affections between a husband and his wife are deeply personal, we should not be ashamed to celebrate our love before a dying world.

**Pray for boldness to share the blessings of holy living and to be a true example of the love we share in marriage.**

## 4. HEART WELL // MATTHEW 15:19

Water wells were important during biblical times because they sustained life in communities. Similarly, the heart can be seen as a well because it also sustains life. Just as it was important to keep biblical community wells free from impurities and filled, it's even more important to keep our hearts clean and filled.

**Such impurities as "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander" have no place in the heart well of a believer.**

## 5. FIRST DEFENSE // PROVERBS 4:23

The heart is the center of a person's true character, and therefore of his purity or impurity (Matt. 15:18). Many times, we make ourselves impure because of what comes out of our mouths. Therefore, it's necessary to guard what goes into our hearts through our eyes and ears. This is our first defense for godly living. Protecting our hearts prevents us from losing our physical, emotional, and spiritual stability and keeps us connected to the Holy Spirit.

**We should entrust our hearts to God's care and protect it from the evils of the world.**



## SESSION 6

# HONOR ALL RELATIONSHIPS

### THE POINT:

INTEGRITY AND CONTENTMENT IN CHRIST FORM THE FOUNDATION FOR GOOD RELATIONSHIPS.

EXODUS /// 20:15-17; PSALM /// 37:1-6

Ex. 20:15 Do not steal. <sup>16</sup> Do not give false testimony against your neighbor. <sup>17</sup> Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

.....  
Ps. 37:1 Do not be agitated by evildoers; do not envy those who do wrong.  
<sup>2</sup> For they wither quickly like grass and wilt like tender green plants.  
<sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD and do what is good; dwell in the land and live securely. <sup>4</sup> Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires. <sup>5</sup> **Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act,**  
<sup>6</sup> **making your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like the noonday.**

MEMORY VERSE

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KEYWORDS

**a: False testimony (Ex. 20:16)**  
– Has to do with speaking falsely, unjustly, or deceptively against one's neighbor. In the Old Testament, this was a serious offense and punishable by a court of law.

**Covet (Ex. 20:17)** – To desire or take pleasure in someone else's possessions. Coveting is not an external act but has to do with one's hidden mental state.

## WHY IS INTEGRITY AN IMPORTANT FOUNDATION IN RELATIONSHIPS?

The collapse of a structure can be an amazing thing to watch. One minute you're looking at a fully standing building, bridge, or tunnel, then within seconds, the entire structure collapses into a pile of ashes and rubble.

In controlled demolition, experts place a number of small explosives strategically throughout the structure. Strategic placement is pivotal to destroy the structural integrity of the building without destroying what's around it. The term used for this strategy is *implosion*. It may look chaotic, but it safely protects buildings close by.

The structural integrity of our lives and relationships matters just as much as it does for a building. It takes only a second for a relationship to implode. One lie can collapse a friendship. One slanderous accusation can destroy people's perception of us. One wrong choice carried out to its fullest can cause a decade of growth to crumble. The Ten Commandments provide a solid foundation—built on honor and contentment—to ensure the structural integrity of our relationships.

### Watch Your Speech and Actions // Exodus 20:15-16

A preacher boarded a bus, paid his fare, and the driver gave him change. As the preacher sat down, counting his coins, he discovered the driver gave him too much. Returning to the front of the bus, he handed the driver two quarters and said, “You gave me too much change.”

The bus driver smiled saying, “Pastor, I really appreciate this, because I was in your church service yesterday, and I heard your sermon on honesty. I intentionally gave you too much change to see whether you live by what you preach.”

### WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT FOR BELIEVERS TO BE PEOPLE OF INTEGRITY?

Integrity ought to be automatic for us. We never know who is watching our actions or listening to our words. The apostle Peter framed integrity to show it as a ready defense: “Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so



that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits" (1 Pet. 2:12).

Being honorable is at the heart of two of the Ten Commandments: "Do not steal" and "Do not give false testimony against your neighbor." We're to treat others and their possessions with respect in word and action. Jesus said, "Let your 'yes' mean 'yes,' and your 'no' mean 'no'" (Matt. 5:37). These virtues define a kingdom disciple. Jesus summed it up when He said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

Loving one another always includes speaking truth in love (Eph. 4:15). People excuse a lie because it's "a little white lie," which is like being a "little pregnant." Lies can create a boomerang effect and return, causing great damage.

We need to live with integrity, modeling our thoughts, words, and actions after God because our lives should bring glory to Him and advance His kingdom. We want our lives to represent God well. When we don't, we aren't reflecting the truth of who God is. When we lie or are deceptive, we're showcasing the "father of

lies," Satan's nature, instead of God's.

#### WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR SOCIETY WHEN PEOPLE DON'T LIVE WITH HONESTY AND INTEGRITY?

### Be Content

// Exodus 20:17

Aesop's Fables include the story of a dog crossing a bridge with a bone in his mouth. As he considered the water, he saw a reflection of what he thought was a larger dog with an even larger bone. Wanting the bigger bone, the dog opened his mouth to go after it, dropping his bone into the water where it sunk. Not only did the dog not get the "larger bone," but he lost the one he'd been enjoying.

Dissatisfaction with what you've already got is the quickest path toward losing it.

Contentment shouldn't depend on things or circumstances. Contentment is realizing that God has met your needs, and coupling that realization with gratitude.

#### WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL STEPS WE CAN TAKE TO AVOID DISCONTENTMENT IN OUR LIVES?

Contentment is:

- Being just as happy



### DIGGING DEEPER

#### THE SIN OF ACHAN

When the Israelites set out to conquer the promised land, a man named Achan sinned when he first "coveted" some beautiful things and then "took them" (Josh. 7:21), in violation of God's command to destroy everything in Jericho. Achan's sinful action began with a sinful thought, which had devastating consequences initially for the Israelites and ultimately for him and his family, since he and his sons and daughters were stoned to death as a result of his sin (vv. 24-25). In the New Testament, Jesus clarified how even a thought can be sinful (Matt. 5:28), and that sinful actions originate in the heart (15:19).

#### How does the sin of coveting challenge our integrity?



driving an old hooptie as driving a new Mercedes®. Both are transportation.

- Being fine with living in an 800-square-foot apartment as in a four-thousand-square-foot house. Both are housing.
- Enjoying a hot dog as much as a T-bone steak. Both are food.
- Being just as satisfied wearing thrift store clothing as wearing a designer outfit. Both are clothes.

Living in contentment acknowledges God's goodness, provision, and timing. Paul shared:

"I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. I know both how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of

being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:11-13).

The secret to contentment is knowing all we have and can do comes through Christ, who loves us most. Contentment is the key to a life of integrity because it provides the security necessary to rest in God's provision. Find contentment in God and find the secret to a satisfying life.

## Trust in the Lord

// Psalm 37:1-6

David captures the heart of the commandment not to covet. He reminds us not to envy those who disregard God yet seem to thrive. As another psalmist wrote, "My feet almost slipped; my steps nearly went astray. For I

envied the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Ps. 73:2-3).

The antidote for such envy and dissatisfaction comes from looking to God instead of gawking at the wicked. We are to "trust" and "take delight" in Him and Him alone. All we could ever desire rests in God.

## WHAT EVIDENCE HAVE YOU SEEN THAT GOD'S COMMANDS ARE FOR OUR OWN GOOD?

Early in ministry, struggling with contentment, I wanted the ministry to grow and expand. My attitude caused me to work long hours when I may not have needed to. My focus was on my own efforts.

I received vital advice from a former seminary classmate who had an impactful ministry. He said, "Tony, never forget this truth: you only have one



Source. God is your Source. Everything else is just a resource."

That truth enabled me to rest. Since God was my Source, He would provide a way to achieve the outcomes if it was His will. This truth rests on a powerful verse: "And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8).

This means none of us needs to worry or fret about what other people are accomplishing or doing. It's a normal human inclination to make comparisons. David appeared to struggle with this, and we do too—but that doesn't mean it's healthy. We can let go of competition and embrace our completion in Christ. "Trust in the Lord and do what is good," living life by the virtues and values of God's kingdom.

In Christ, you receive your heart's desires, His endless provision, and rest. Align your thoughts, words, and actions under His authority and trust His provision. Give Christ your heart by giving Him your loyalty. Then watch Him bring you delight as He delights in you.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Though not stated, one implication of the command, do not covet, is the right to own personal property. Some people may injure or exploit others in their pursuit of possessions. Possessions can potentially draw a person's heart away from God, but in contrast they can be used (even given away) for good and godly purposes. When the slaves were freed by the war and the proclamation of the president of the United States, on Jan. 16, 1865, General William T. Sherman sought to give away land for godly purposes. He issued an order to give the newly freed slaves 40 acres of tillable land. He also ordered the army to loan the freed families a mule; hence the familiar name for the order, "40 acres and a mule." However, President Andrew Johnson overturned the order with one swipe of his pen.<sup>7</sup>

#### HOW DO YOU THINK THIS OCCURRENCE MAY HAVE IMPACTED THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN'S TRUST IN GOD?

## LIVE IT

### How will you seek to live a life of integrity?

Integrity becomes crucial for our culture's stability when it seems to be ruled by deceit and mistrust. People of integrity create the harmony necessary for relationships to thrive. The Ten Commandments provide a solid foundation to ensure the structural integrity of our relationships.

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- Watch your words and actions this week. Be a person of honesty and truthfulness.
- TV or social media can cause depression or feelings of dissatisfaction. Encourage those struggling with dissatisfaction.
- Keep the heartbeat of the Ten Commandments by allowing God to love others through you.



# DAILY READINGS

## 1. TRUST OVER GREED // EXODUS 20:15-17

The heart of these commandments center on loving others and respecting their possessions. When we are thankful and content with what we have, there is no room for covetous behavior. Contentment does not mean we have settled for what we have; rather, it means we have a healthy trust in God. We trust that the love of God is true, and we trust that what He desires for us, He is able to provide.

**So, instead of wanting more possessions, we should want more of God. His goodness and grace is sufficient for all we need.**

## 2. WIN THEM WITH HONOR // 1 PETER 2:12

The phrase “kill ‘em with kindness” refers to being overly kind to others even when they’re not kind to you. Peter shared this biblical principle and God’s expectation of His people to act honorably always. So, how can you win those who are unkind to us? Represent God well as an honorable person in everything you say and do. This will cause them to see you in a new light and give glory to God. The kindness of your heart toward them may even win them for Christ.

**Let us establish our behavior in God’s goodness so that even those who may despise us will glorify God.**

## 3. SERVING UP TRUTH // EPHESIANS 4:15

Would you prefer to hear what people think you want to hear or would you want to hear the truth? Though we may not like or agree with the truth, we’re better off when we truly know what’s going on. The icing on the cake for us is that our truth spoken in love covers our words with sweetness and causes hearers to have the assurance that we have their best interests at heart. Because of this, we should never deviate from the truth.

**If we need help, we should ask the Spirit for wisdom to speak the truth in God’s love.**

## 4. CONTENT IN ALL THINGS // PHILIPPIANS 4:11-13

The source of some of life’s issues is in a lack of contentment. Either our expectations aren’t met, leading to disappointment, or we’re envious of what others have, causing dissatisfaction. Paul said he was content in whatever circumstance he was in. Even though Paul was in need and inside a Roman prison, he was content. The source of contentment isn’t a secret for believers. We know that if we base our contentment on things or people, we’re guaranteed disappointment. However, just like Paul, focusing on God’s plan for our lives and living that plan, ensures contentment in all things.

**Accept Christ’s will for your life and believe He will provide all you need to live it out, then you too will be content in all things.**

## 5. DELIGHTFUL DESIRES // PSALM 37:4

God doesn’t just want good for us; He wants us to be delighted in Him and His desires for us. To delight in someone means to find extreme satisfaction in that person. But this can happen only when we know him or her. So, if we’re to delight in the Lord, we must grow to know Him. The satisfaction we have in knowing God and His provision will reap the blessings of a happy and satisfied life. In knowing God, our desires will not be clouded by envy, jealousy, or even worry.

**Rather, in submission to His will, our desires should flow through God and His Word with delight.**



# Teaching the Ten Commandments to the Next Generation

NATASHA MENIFEE

When you hear The Ten Commandments, what comes to mind? Law—Love—Restriction—Rescue. Most often we say God’s law, and for many adults that translates to His love. This is not the case however with younger generations. Generation Z and even some millennials have a different opinion when it comes to the word “law” and the legal system in general. The social injustices and divisive government practices they have witnessed gives a different meaning to the word law. For them, law does not necessarily translate to love. For this generation, it equates to restriction and has a negative connotation. Whether their thinking is accurate or not, it is where we are in 2020.

Therefore, we have a responsibility to the generations coming behind us to share the truth of what God has given to His people through the Ten Commandments. God does not save us, turn us loose and say “do your best!” He loves us too much for that. Rather, believers have a clear and concise set of directions on how to navigate life. The first three laws are given to show us how to be in relationship with God. The remaining

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seven, teach us how to have a relationship with one another. Unfortunately, many people see them as outdated and irrelevant. Nothing could be further from the truth. God's Word is timeless and will stand forever (Isaiah 40:8). But the question remains, how do we re-present this Old Testament truth to a new generation? Allow me to offer three suggestions on how to guide this generation to love God's law.

### Know Your Audience

In order to teach the upcoming generation, you must get to know the generation. Gone are the days when adults tell you what you should believe and you just believe it. Today young



people do not take everything at face value just because someone says it is so. They want to know the “why” behind it. Why is the Bible important to my life? Why should I read what I don’t understand? Take some time to build a relationship with your youth or young adults. Once trust has been established, receiving instruction from you becomes easier for them. Paul stated, “I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). Are you willing to do whatever is necessary to reach across generations so that they will have a relationship with Christ?

### Trade Translations

Most young people (adults too) cannot understand all the thee’s and thou’s of the King James version of the Bible. Not that there is anything wrong with this translation; however, it is important to encourage younger generations to read a version they can understand. If their version of the Bible causes a lack of understanding, a lack of application will potentially follow. The majority of youth and young adults don’t even use an actual print Bible; instead, they tap and scroll. Their world is one of technology and apps, why not use technology to guide their spiritual growth. This means we will see phones in Bible study, Sunday School, even worship. We have to allow ourselves to be stretched beyond our comfort zone in order for our generation to teach the next one.

### Connect the Dots

Whether it is in daily conversation or Bible study, we have an obligation to connect the dots of Scripture to this generation. They need to know why what happened yesterday is important to their lives today. Using this teaching model provides biblical context (then) and life application (now).

Natasha Meniffee is a writer and teacher who serves as the Christian education director at First Baptist Church, Winchester, Ky. She holds two master’s degrees from Georgetown College, one in learning/behavior disorders and the other in teacher leadership. She is the proud mother of two daughters.

# LEADER GUIDE

## STUDY 1 AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART:

### A FRESH LOOK AT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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#### INTRODUCTION

Ethics and morals have become skewed. People want to live life on their own terms, but God has given us a succinct and clear path to follow through the Ten Commandments. Unfortunately, too many people see these Commandments as a negative list of don'ts, but obedience to these Commandments leads to a rich and full life. King David knew this. David was identified

as “a man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22), and he loved and valued the commands of God. Through David's life and psalms, he gave us good examples of what happens when we follow the Ten Commandments and bad examples of what happens when we don't.

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#### Writer Bio

##### **Dieuner Joseph**

wrote the leader pages for this study. He holds dual master's degrees in divinity and theology from Princeton Theological Seminary as well as a D. Min. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He serves as the associate pastor at Pleasant Grove Church in Cary, N.C. Dr. Joseph and his wife Colette are the proud parents of Lysandra and Uriah.



## BEFORE YOU TEACH

### *Review the entire study*

In this study, we will be taking a fresh look at the Ten Commandments. Take the time to review all the sessions to develop a broader understanding of how obedience to the Ten Commandments can lead to a Christ-centered life.

### *Put in a plug*

Consider taking a few minutes to introduce learners to the new *YOU* Sunday School curriculum. Use pages 6, 7, and 163 to guide you. Another useful page to explore would be the “God’s Unfailing Promise” column on page 2. Invite them to use it to share Christ with a lost person.

## LOOK BACK

Last week’s session focused on standing strong dressed in God’s armor during our spiritual battles. Remind learners to put on God’s armor so they can stand firm against the enemy’s attacks. **ASK:** “How did the lesson empower you to fight your spiritual battles?” Remind them that they already have the victory against the enemy in the name of Jesus.

## TEACHING PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

Before the session, download the *American Idol* Disney® Night Performances video from YouTube® or go to [lifeway.com/YOU](http://lifeway.com/YOU) for the video. Begin the session by watching the first performance on the video. Explain that sometimes we show what we idolize or what has first place in our lives by our behavior. In the video, the audience demonstrated they idolized the singer.

**PACK ITEM:** Use **Pack Item 1: After God’s Own Heart** poster to identify the six sessions in this study.

**TRANSITION:** Read **The Point: “God is to have first place in every aspect of life”** to transition.

## DIG INTO THE TEXT

### **God Alone Is God // Exodus 20:1-6**

**ASK:** “When has a simple solution taken you by surprise?”

**SUMMARIZE:** Provide a summary of the paragraph that begins “Have you ever . . .” and the two subsequent paragraphs (p. 12).

**RECAP:** Read aloud this paragraph (pp. 12-13):

*God calls us to devote ourselves to Him first because He alone is God. In Him we find true life, both in this world and in eternity. As King, He sits over all. He rules over all. He governs all. God’s rules are rooted in love, and He calls us to love Him. Jesus summed up what our devotion to God looks like: Love God and love others (Mark 12:29-31).*

**READ:** Invite a learner to read aloud Exodus 20:1-6.

**DISCUSS:** Lead learners to discuss what it looks like to place God “first” in today’s culture. Explain that though we do not bow down to wooden idols or statues or declare our devotion through rituals or sacrifice, there are idols all around us. Refer to the first two paragraphs under the “God Alone Is God” heading (p. 12).

**ASK:** “Do you have an idol that’s taking your focus away from God? What is it?”

**OBJECT LESSON:** Use the “Object Lesson” on page 104 to help learners evaluate their priorities.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for Exodus 20:1-2 on page 104 to discuss why God gave the Israelites the command to give Him first place in their lives.

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Use “Digging Deeper” to highlight what makes the Ten Commandments special, and ask the question that follows (p. 13).

**PACK ITEM:** Distribute **Pack Item 2: The Ten Commandments** handout and review with learners to provide an overview of all the Commandments.

**SAY:** “Obedience to the first command means we will place God first in our lives.” Emphasize that the first commandment reflects an inward focus—related



## THE POINT: GOD IS TO HAVE FIRST PLACE IN EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE.

to the heart. If we do not love God with our whole heart, we will not place Him first.

**ASK:** “How can following the commands of God help to build a loving relationship with Him?”

**SAY:** “God’s rightful place in our lives should not be upended by any person, place, thought, or thing.”

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “To put God first . . .” (p. 13). Then ask learners to share their reaction to the statement: “God is a jealous God.”

**SAY:** “God wants to have an exclusive relationship with us that is predicated upon our love for Him.” Remind learners that putting God first demonstrates our gratitude to Him for His many blessings.

### God Alone Is Good // Psalm 16:1-4a

**GUIDE:** Direct learners to share a definition of “good,” then remind learners that all good comes from God because He alone is good.

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read Psalm 16:1-4a.

**RECAP:** Invite a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins “When David said . . .” (p. 13).

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for Psalm 16:1-2 on page 105 to discuss David’s confession that reminds us we cannot experience what is good without God.

**ASK:** “What experiences from your life reflect the truth that God is good?”

**SAY:** “When things are not good, Satan plants doubt in our hearts about God’s goodness.”

**READ:** Invite two volunteers to read the two points on pages 13-14.

**ASK:** “When are you most tempted to put your trust in something besides the Lord?”

**DISCUSS:** Remind learners that when their experiences do not feel or seem good, they have to trust that God will use those experiences to create good in their lives.

**RECAP:** Read the following paragraph (p. 14):

*Like Paul and Job, our experiences may not always feel or seem good. But we’re assured all things will be used for good when we love God*

*and put Him first (Rom. 8:28-29). This promise in Romans 8:28-29 is for those “who love God” and live “according to His purpose.” Translation: It’s for those who put God first.*

### God Alone Is the Way to Eternal Life // Psalm 16:9-11

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read Psalm 16:9-11.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for verses 9-10 (p. 105) to highlight the fact that David rejoiced in his relationship with God, and praised the Lord for revealing the path of life to him. Without God, we cannot know where we’re going.

**READ:** Recruit a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “Most of us . . .” (p. 14).

**ASK:** “How important is it for a Christian to choose God’s way instead of following his or her way?”

**SAY:** “David teaches us that God shows us the path of life on earth through His guidance, teachings, and directions.”

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins “God’s way . . .” (p. 14) to discuss the “abundant joy” and “eternal pleasures” God gives to those who follow His way.

**ASK:** “What has God done recently that has made you glad and led you to rejoice?” Remind learners that God will lead them along the path of life that leads to eternity if they love Him and value His commands.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Use “Did You Know?” to highlight the early African-American attitude toward God, and ask the question that follows (p. 15).

**READ:** Enlist a learner to read the paragraph that begins, “Too many people . . .” (p. 15) to discuss the real purpose for the law.

**SAY:** “It is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ that we are saved and not by obeying the Ten Commandments.” Remind learners that Jesus is the way to true life on earth and in eternity.

## CLOSING THE SESSION

Encourage learners to share some of their key takeaways from today's lesson. Remind them of the three main points of the lesson: "God Alone Is God;" "God Alone Is Good;" and "God Alone Is the Way to Eternal Life." Putting God first is the best remedy for living in a messy world. Remind them not to take the goodness of God for granted, and not to devise their own path. Instead, they should remain in Jesus and align themselves under Him. Challenge them to include the applications from "Live It" on page 15 in their plans this week.

**PRAY:** Conclude with a prayer of thanksgiving that God alone is the provider of true life both now and for eternity. May we always put Him first and seek Him before and above everything else.

## OBJECT LESSON

Encourage learners to pull up their calendars on their phones and to spend a few minutes examining any commitments they have recorded there for the month.

**ASK:** "How many of you use your calendar to keep track of appointments and events? If you do, what do you think those appointments say about your priorities?"

**ASK:** "Do you ever feel your calendar is in control of you instead of you being in control of your calendar?"

**SAY:** "Many times our daily routines, schedules, and appointments drive what we do. However, God alone is God and deserves to be first in our lives."



## COMMENTARY

### EXODUS 20:1-6

**Verse 1.** God led the Israelites to Mount Sinai where He gave the Israelites a set of decrees, chiefly and most succinctly expressed in the Ten Commandments. These words express how all people of every age should approach God, life, and relationships.

**Verse 2.** Before God pronounced His covenant stipulations and moral expectations, He emphasized the personal relationship He had with the Israelites. He was the God who had made and knew the Israelites. He also reminded them that through the exodus from Egypt, God had set Himself apart from the false gods of other nations.

The words that follow were not conditional requirements for the establishment of a future relationship; instead, they were covenantal responsibilities emerging from the ongoing relationship the Israelites had with the Lord based upon God's past act of deliverance. As the Israelites obeyed these words of God, they could experience the continued blessing of a relationship with a loving, perfect Master who was ultimately concerned for their well-being.

**Verse 3.** God prohibited them from taking, worshiping, or loving any other gods besides Him. This first command reflects an inward focus—related to the heart. Without this "heart" commitment to God (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 6:33; 22:37), the Israelites would have neither the inclination nor the motivation to obey the other commandments.

**Verses 4-5a.** This second command builds on the first by discussing what is improper related to the worship of Yahweh. Idol refers to any image (carved, shaped, or molded) made to depict their invisible God.

**Verses 5b-6.** In elaborating on the second command, the Lord said He is a jealous [zealous] God. Those who reject God, as well as later generations, will face the ongoing consequences of their sin. Love and hate refer to a person's

loyalty (obedience) or disloyalty (disobedience) to God's covenant.

## PSALM 16:1-4A

**Verses 1-2.** David knew his life was in God's hands. He asked God to protect him. The only trustworthy and consistent refuge is found in God. David recognized the Lord (Yahweh) as his Lord (Adonai). In calling God Yahweh, David recognized both God's self-existence and that God is the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. David's use of Adonai reflects his submission to God and reverence for Him as sovereign over all creation. David also acknowledged he had nothing good besides the Lord. No matter what wonderful things David possessed, they did not compare with what he had in his relationship with the Lord. All David possessed came from the Lord as well.

**Verse 3.** After reflecting on the uniqueness of God, David thought about the holy people (literally, "the holy ones"). Since the Hebrew word *qadosh* ("holy") can refer to heavenly beings (Ps. 89:5-7) as well as humans (34:9), David clarified that he was referring to those who are in the land—most likely referring to the Israelites who were set apart by God. These people, though by no means perfect, heeded God's command to "be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:2). David loved these faithful people, noting that all his delight was in them.

**Verse 4a.** Not everyone, however, is faithful to God. David called attention to those who take another god for themselves, which may be a reference to the people of pagan nations who worshiped false gods or to the people of Israel who had turned away from God. Rather than receiving the increasing blessings that come from being devoted to God, those people would experience only sorrows that multiply.

## PSALM 16:9-11

**Verses 9-10.** Reflecting on the many blessings that flowed from his relationship with God, David proclaimed that his heart was glad and his whole being rejoiced. Both expressions emphasize the joy of his relationship with God.

David added "my body also rests securely" (v. 9), most likely referring to his resurrection after death. But David was not thinking only of himself with these words. Both the apostles Peter (Acts 2:25-28) and Paul (13:35) quoted from this psalm in reference to Jesus, the Messiah. God the Father did not abandon Jesus (God's faithful one) to Sheol (the grave). Nor did God allow Jesus to see decay—a reference to the natural process that happens after a body is buried. While David was "dead and buried" (Acts 2:29) and his body "decayed" (13:36), God raised Jesus to life again on the third day. Only because of Jesus' death and resurrection can we have a relationship with God and experience forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. While David prophesied about the Messiah, his words also expressed his own confidence that even death itself could not separate him (or any believer) from the Lord (see Rom. 8:31-39).

**Verse 11.** David continued praising God, who had revealed the path of life to him. David knew true life goes beyond what we experience in this life. Thus David expressed confidence that God would faithfully bring him to the life to come, where God's people will experience abundant joy and eternal pleasures as they dwell forever in His presence.

David's words are a reminder that this life is finite; the path or way to true life comes only through faith in Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Through faith in Jesus we can experience eternal life (3:16) and joy that is "complete" in Him (15:11).



Read the article "The Law as God's Gracious Gift" in the Fall 2020 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles "The 10 Words and Ancient Near Eastern Laws" (Winter 2015-2016), "The Attraction of Idolatry" (Summer 2013), and "Before Me" (Fall 1996) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator). Look for Bundles: *Bible Studies for Life*.

## BEFORE YOU TEACH

### ***Enlist someone to share***

Send an email to learners to find out if any of them were in the U.S. military. The U.S. military has a very stringent code of honor by which it expects its soldiers to operate. Invite a volunteer to be prepared to discuss that code to help the group develop a deeper appreciation of how we should honor God.

### ***Evaluate your honor***

Your words and actions are a testimony of your honor to God. Think about areas in your own life where you are not honoring God. What steps are you taking to make changes in those areas? Consider the way you honor God with your time, talent, and treasure. Is the worship of Almighty God your number-one priority?

## LOOK BACK

Refer to the Study Overview (p. 10), which encouraged learners to live out the Ten Commandments. Remind learners that when they give anyone or anything the devotion, authority, and worship God alone deserves, the Bible describes it as idolatry. Encourage them to place God first, and we won't have to guess how to live in this world.

## TEACHING PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

Explain that most Americans stand up during the national anthem to show honor, and no one ever complains about the length of it. Yet many Christians are indifferent to Sunday's worship service at their church and complain it is too long.

Remind learners that God is far more important than the U.S. flag. Introduce the lesson by reading Psalm 145:1-2. Share that David was passionate about honoring God. One of the best ways to honor God is through our spiritual worship. Transition into today's session by reading **The Point: "Our relationship with God is seen in how we honor Him."**

## DIG INTO THE TEXT

### **Honor God's Name // Exodus 20:7-11**

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read Exodus 20:7-11.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary (p. 108) to explain God's command not to misuse His name and to discuss giving honor to His name on the Sabbath.

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, "Choose your favorite . . ." (p. 18). Invite the U.S. military learner to discuss the code of honor.

**SAY:** "When a role requires honor, most people treat it with the respect it deserves."

**PACK ITEM:** Use the **Pack Item 3: Characteristics of God** poster to highlight God's characteristics. Discuss that these reveal the reason God deserves honor. Invite learners to add other characteristics of God to the poster.

**DISCUSS:** Remind learners that God's name, Yahweh, reflects His nature and character. It stands for His authority and sovereignty. Lead learners to discuss the reason they should not take the name of God in vain.

**GUIDE:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, "Too often . . ." (p. 18). Remind learners that the fourth commandment includes a warning of divine punishment for people who misuse the name of the Lord.

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Use "Digging Deeper" (p. 19) to enforce the proper use of God's name, then ask the question that follows.

**SAY:** "Christians are to carry the name of Christ with honor, but if we live in disobedience to Him, we dishonor His name." Remind learners that our words and actions should not only honor His great name but also all that His name represents.

**DID YOU KNOW?:** Use "Did You Know?" (p. 21) to discuss the importance of the names of God for slave worshipers, then ask the question that follows.

## Honor God Through Worship // Psalm 145:1-3

**DISCUSS:** Invite learners to provide their definition of the word *worship*. **Ask:** “Why is worship vital to a right relationship with God?”

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read Psalm 145:1-3.

**RECAP:** Read aloud the following paragraph (p. 19):

*“Every day.” Those two words stand out in verses 1-3. David praised God and declared he would bless God every day. Not just on the good days. Not just on the days when he felt like dancing and singing in the streets. Not just on the victory days. No, David wrote about his heart’s desire to worship God every day and praise His name forever and ever.*

**ASK:** “What does it look like to bless the Lord each day?” **Say:** “Christians should exalt the name of God every day in a spirit of worship.”

**GUIDE:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “Do you desire . . .” (p. 19). **Ask:** “What are some obstacles that get in the way of our worship of God daily?”

**EMPHASIZE:** Remind learners that worship is a lifestyle and not a practice. It comes from a heart of surrender and reflects a desire to give God the honor that is due to His name.

**SAY:** “Worship cannot be haphazard. It must be intentional and Spirit-led.” For, “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

**GUIDE:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “God holds . . .” (p. 20). Remind learners that the altitude of their worship determines the attitude of their faith. Use the commentary for verse 3 on pages 108-109 to discuss David’s words.

**SAY:** “David reminds us there are limits to what we can fathom about God, His nature, and His activity. Yet, if we choose to honor Him with our worship despite our circumstance, we will draw closer to Him.” **Ask:** “What does it look like to bless the Lord each day?”

## Honor God Through Actions // Psalm 145:4-7

**SAY:** “It is important to tell others about the greatness of our God.” Invite volunteers to share their testimonies about God’s great goodness.

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read Psalm 145:4-7, then ask: “What lessons do we learn from David in these verses?” Remind learners that honoring God should be prioritized over honoring self and others.

**READ:** Recruit a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “David’s heart . . .” (p. 20).

**ASK:** Direct learners to answer the question: “What are some ways our group can celebrate God’s goodness together?”

**RECAP:** Read aloud the following paragraph (p. 20):

*Anytime we shift the focus from God and His rightful position and place it on ourselves, we have failed to honor God. This is like the church at Ephesus, “I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first” (Rev. 2:4).*

**SAY:** “It is said that generation Z is the least religious generation ever. How can we best declare the wonderful works of Almighty God and His righteousness to that generation?” (See the article on page 49 to provide ideas.)

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “So, how do we . . .” (p. 21). Share with learners that when they reflect on all God has done, they will want to honor Him, and His praises shall continually be in their mouths (Ps. 34:1).

**OBJECT LESSON:** Use the “Object Lesson” on page 108 to reinforce what it means to honor God.

**DISCUSS:** Lead learners to discuss what it means to celebrate God’s abundant goodness. Direct them to answer the question: “What have previous generations taught you about honoring the Lord?”

Encourage learners to reverence the name of God and to keep God first in all areas of life. **Say:** “What made David a man according to God’s own heart was his willingness to proclaim to others what God has done for him, and his passion for worshipping the Almighty.”



## CLOSING THE SESSION

Consider singing the song “To God Be the Glory.”

**SAY:** “To be a Christian is to carry the name of Christ with honor for all to see.” Urge learners to complete “Live It” on page 21 this week. Encourage them to think about the way they talk about God and whether honoring God is an integral part of their spiritual practices.

**PRAY:** Close the session by thanking God for His great goodness and for revealing His glory through Christ Jesus. Ask Him to strengthen us to honor His name not just on Sunday but every day of our lives.

## OBJECT LESSON

Bring a picture of a soldier and the flag of the United States. Also, bring index cards and pens to class. Display the pictures in front of the class.

**ASK:** “What do the pictures have in common?” “What do you think of when you see a soldier or the flag?” Point out that each picture is a symbol of honor and patriotism.

Distribute index cards and pens to learners. Direct them to write a few sentences honoring the person sitting to their right. Allow time for each learner to read what each has written.

**ASK:** “How does honoring our country and honoring each other help you understand what it means to honor God?”

**SAY:** “We honor our country and people by showing respect; we honor God by showing respect as well but He deserves so much more because of who He is. We honor God with our very lives, and we give Him reverence, admiration, adoration, awe, praise, submission, and obedience.”



## COMMENTARY

### EXODUS 20:7-11

**Verse 7.** A person’s name is a symbol or representation of that person. God’s name, Yahweh, reflects His nature and character. It stands for everything He is—His essence. God’s command not to misuse His name is not a prohibition against taking oaths in the Lord’s name (see Deut. 6:13; Rev 10:5-6 for two examples where this was acceptable). Rather, it prohibits the misuse of God’s name in any manner. God promised He would punish any person who misuses His name.

**Verses 8-11.** The Hebrew word for Sabbath (*shabbat*) literally means “to cease, stop, or rest.” We usually think of rest in connection with being physically tired and in need of renewal and recovery. While it is true the command to rest on the Sabbath calls for people to take a break from their daily labor, arguably the primary focus is a call to devote this day specifically to focus on God.

To remember involves meditating and/or reflecting on something. Here the Israelites were commanded to think about the Sabbath in relation to what they knew of creation. God rested (stopped working) to set an example for His people, who need time apart from the ongoing activity of life (work) to refocus on renewing and deepening their relationship with their Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. To remember the Sabbath meant first ceasing from everyday work on the seventh day to devote that day to worship of and communion with the Lord.

The Israelites had earlier been given instructions about the Sabbath (Ex. 16:23; see also vv. 29-30). At Mount Sinai, they were reminded again of this fact and were commanded to keep the day holy. As God’s holy people (19:6) they were to sanctify (set apart) the Sabbath, treating it differently from the other six days of the week.

### PSALM 145:1-3

**Verses 1-2.** David recognized God as the King. He acknowledged God’s rule and reign over his own life.

Note also David's personal relationship with the King, whom he referred to as "my God." To exalt means to lift or raise up. Exalting God means recognizing and elevating Him to His rightful place in one's own life—as ruler over everything. God's name represents all He is, especially His nature and character.

Though he knew the Sabbath was set aside as a day for renewal and worship, David did not wait for a special day to bless (praise) the matchless God. Nor did he worship only when he gathered with others in the "house of the LORD" (Ps. 122:1). Worship was an activity David engaged in every day—it was his lifestyle. Twice in this verse David uses the words "I will," indicating that he was not simply considering these things, but would do them.

David did not expect his praises to end; he noted they would continue forever and ever. Even after death, David knew he would join with others in perpetual praise to the Lord.

**Verse 3.** In this verse David shifted from talking to God to speaking about God. First he referenced God's covenant name: LORD (Yahweh), emphasizing God's self-existent, ever-present, and unchanging nature. God is great, which is a specific reference to His actions. David stressed that God's greatness is unsearchable. He recognized there are limits to what we can fathom about God, His nature, and His activity. Even so, God is worthy of our praise and is highly (or greatly) praised. For example, Isaiah's vision of the Lord on His throne (Isa. 6:1-5) drove him to his knees in recognition of the vast contrast between his sinful human nature and the Lord's holiness and perfection.

## PSALM 145:4-7

**Verse 4.** Those who know the Lord must continue to share Him from generation to generation. The word "declare" can also be translated "praise" and carries the idea of someone praising the Lord in the presence of others, which in this case would be the next generation. The Hebrew word translated proclaim (*nagad*) pictures someone standing boldly in front of another person to make something known. David pointed to one generation boldly telling another of God's mighty acts. These would include both the

Lord's powerful deeds for previous generations as well as His powerful works in the current generation. Declaring and proclaiming what God has done should include both historical recollections as well as personal testimonies.

**Verses 5-6.** God is to be praised for His splendor and majesty, as well as His wondrous works. David echoed his previous words as he declared again how the people of "one generation" (v. 4) would proclaim the power of [God's] awe-inspiring acts. While David acknowledged that God's actions "are more than can be told" (Ps. 40:5), he still faithfully joined with others in proclaiming the deeds that magnify God's greatness.

**Verse 7.** Throughout history God's people have experienced His provision, compassion, mercy, generosity, grace, love, comfort, salvation, and much more, which are all part of His great goodness. Therefore, they should proclaim to others what God has done for them. They will tell not only of God's majesty and blessings but also of His righteousness. This word refers to what is right, true, virtuous, and just. God is the standard for righteousness. Because God is righteous, everything He says and does is right. God's character never changes, thus His righteousness is eternal (Pss. 111:3; 112:3; 119:142; Isa. 51:8).



Read the article "To Misuse God's Name" in the Fall 2020 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*.

Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles "The Significance of the Sabbath" (Summer 2014), "To 'Blaspheme' God's Name" (Summer 2014), "The Acrostic Psalms: Praising God from A to Z" (Winter 2007-2008), and "The Power Of a Name" (Fall 1996) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator). Look for Bundles: Bible Studies for Life.

## BEFORE YOU TEACH

### *Pray for your students*

The topic of forgiveness in parent and child relationships can be difficult. Pray for Spirit-led wisdom to teach the lesson to help learners understand the spiritual necessity of forgiveness. Pray for God to help restore any broken relationships.

### *Read the teaching helps*

“Digging Deeper,” “Did You Know?,” and the commentary provide the historical facts and biblical context for the Scripture passages. Spend time studying and reflecting on these features to enhance your teaching.

## LOOK BACK

Remind learners that last week we discussed how we should honor God through our relationship with Him. Invite learners to share examples of times they honored God in the past week. Remind learners that the name of the Lord should not be misused, and God is due honor at all times.

## TEACHING PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

Invite volunteers to share something special they did for their mother or father on Mother’s Day or Father’s Day. Provide a summary of the testimony from Tony Evans about his parents (p. 24). **Say:** “Most of us will never know the many sacrifices our parents have made to help us become the people we are today.” Remind learners that when they honor their parents, they also honor God’s commandments, and according to the third commandment, will be blessed.

Explain that today’s lesson focuses on David and his son Absalom. Acknowledge that we all owe a debt of gratitude to our parents and should go out of our way to honor them. Transition into today’s session by reading **The Point: “Honor for parents is seen in our words and actions.”**

## DIG INTO THE TEXT

### Honor Through Respect

#### // Exodus 20:12

**DISCUSS:** Begin by asking learners to share their understanding of what it means to honor parents.

**READ:** Recruit a volunteer to read Exodus 20:12. Lead learners into a discussion about why God made honoring parents a commandment.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for verse 12 (p. 112) to discuss what the commentary says it means to honor parents, the reason it is sometimes difficult, and the resulting blessing for doing so.

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “What is ‘honor’ . . .” (p. 24), and ask, “What are some ways we can show honor to parents?” Allow time for answers.

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “God made it . . .” (p. 24) to explain the reason God is serious about children honoring parents.

**GUIDE:** Discuss the blame versus the praise parents receive, using the illustration in the paragraphs that begin, “Today it’s common . . .” and “Both men . . .” (pp. 24-25).

**EMPHASIZE:** Explain that if there is anyone who struggles with showing respect to their parents because they were abandoned or neglected as a child, they should seek ways to forgive his or her parents. God wants us to show respect despite the current relationship with our parents.

**DISCUSS:** Invite learners to review the three categories on how to show honor (p. 25). Ask them which one of the three categories do they struggle with the most and which one do they have no problem with.

**ASK:** “What are ways our culture shows dishonor to parents?” Remind learners that honor and respect reflect our obedience to God’s commands and are essential foundations in every home.

## Honor Through Truth // 2 Samuel 15:7-12

**READ:** Invite a learner to read 2 Samuel 15:7-12.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for verses 7-9 (pp. 112-113) to set the context for this passage.

**SAY:** “David’s sin against Uriah sowed the seed of deception that led to Absalom’s betrayal of his father.” Refer to the paragraph that begins “David was far . . .” and the paragraph that follows (p. 26). Explain that David’s sin left a legacy of destruction.

**ASK:** “How did your desire to honor your parents impact your decisions?”

**SAY:** “Our parents will never be perfect. However, we can never justify dishonoring our parents because of the mistakes they made.” Remind learners that they as parents will also make mistakes, and will not appreciate their children disrespecting them.

**ASK:** “How can we honor our parents even when they disappoint us?”

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for verses 10-12 to reveal Absalom’s plan to rebel against David. Explain that Absalom lied to his father about his intention for going to Hebron. Instead of going to Hebron to worship the Lord, Absalom went to Hebron with a plan to overthrow his father David.

**OBJECT LESSON:** Use the “Object Lesson” on page 112 to discuss showing integrity when honoring parents.

**SAY:** “Though David was not a model father to his children, Absalom was not justified in dishonoring his father and lying to him.”

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “We cannot honor . . .” (p. 26). Remind learners that Absalom failed in his attempt to overthrow his father because the dishonor and disrespect of David were sinful in the sight of God.

## Honor Through Honor // 2 Samuel 15:13-14

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Read aloud “Digging Deeper” (p. 25) and ask the question that follows. Explain that Absalom sought to gain the admiration of the people by dishonoring his father.

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read 2 Samuel 15:13-14.

**DISCUSS:** Use the paragraph that begins “Absalom’s move to . . .” (p. 26) to discuss more of Absalom’s rebellion and that his dishonorable and contemptuous quest to overthrow his father as king cost him his life.

**EMPHASIZE:** Explain that if Absalom had honored David, he could have become king. Even if Absalom had succeeded in his attempt to overthrow his father, his reign would have been marred by disloyalty, and his life would have been short-lived because he dishonored his father.

**READ:** Reread Exodus 20:12 and remind learners that the sixth commandment includes the blessing of long life (protection) to those who honor their parents.

**ASK:** “In what way has honoring your parents benefited you?”

**READ:** Enlist a learner to read the paragraph that begins, “Dishonor has a way . . .” (p. 27). **SAY:** “Absalom’s lack of concern for the wellbeing of David was dishonorable.” Share with learners that visiting elderly parents in a nursing home, or hospital, or caring for them in their hour of need is quite honorable.

**DID YOU KNOW?:** Use “Did You Know?” (p. 27) to reveal that slave children were taught to honor their parents.

**ASK:** “Whom do you know that models the parent-child relationship in a way that honors God?”



## CLOSING THE SESSION

Review the three categories for showing honor to parents (p. 25).

**SAY:** “An expression of kindness and compassion can heal a broken parent-child relationship and show honor.” Remind learners that every child owes a debt of gratitude to their parents, which should always be repaid with honorable actions and words. Point out that Absalom paid the ultimate price for dishonoring his father David. Encourage learners to read the “Daily Readings” on page 28 during their time of devotion with God.

**PRAY:** Close in prayer, asking God to equip parents to face the challenges of being a parent in today’s culture and to give children eyes to see the hearts of their parents, despite any mistakes in parenting.

## OBJECT LESSON

Prior to the session, spray-paint a fist-sized rock gold. Say to the group, “Absalom deceived David. Instead of giving honor to his father, he gave him a lie that was dressed in the clothes of respect and integrity.” Display the rock and say, “This is an ordinary rock painted gold. Suppose a man said to his father, ‘As a way of thanking you for all the things you’ve done for me, I want to give you this rock made of gold.’”

**EXPLAIN:** Share with the group, just looking at it, anyone can tell it’s not made of gold; it’s worthless.

**ASK:** “How do you think the father would respond?”

**DISCUSS:** Guide the group to discuss how the rock dishonored the father. Encourage learners to honor their parents with truth and integrity.



## COMMENTARY

### EXODUS 20:12

**Verse 12.** To honor parents means giving them the respect they deserve—valuing them and caring for them. We must demonstrate this by the way we speak to (or about) them and how we act toward them. This command doesn’t end when we reach adulthood and are no longer dependent upon our parents. In addition to helping our parents with their financial needs when they are unable to provide for themselves, we honor our parents when we continue to be involved in their lives, not only as we give them our attention, time, and love, but also as we seek their wisdom, listen to them, and remain patient with them (especially when their mental and physical capabilities decline).

While no parent is perfect, some parents have failed in their responsibility to care for and nurture their children in a godly manner. They may have neglected their children, or they could have been abusive to them. Thus it can be hard for some people to feel their parents are worthy of respect. But no matter how we may feel about them at a particular time, God calls us to always treat our parents with the honor He says they deserve. Of course, this command doesn’t require someone to remain in, accept, or condone an abusive relationship. In such a case, honoring one’s father and/or mother may involve removing one’s self from the abusive environment and forgiving the abusive parent(s) in one’s heart.

The resulting long life in the land was more of a communal promise than it was an individual promise. While the fifth commandment was the first that included a promise, obedience to all of God’s commands was expected if the Israelites wanted to live long lives in the land God was giving them and experience His continual blessing.

### 2 SAMUEL 15:7-12

**Verses 7-9.** After the rape and disgrace of his sister, Tamar, by her half-brother Amnon, Absalom killed Amnon and fled Israel. After three years, David allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem, though he did not



see his son for another two years. When they finally experience a reunion, it was apparently not a complete reconciliation. Absalom, who apparently resented how David had kept him at a distance the previous five years (as well as how his father had failed to address Amnon's sin against Tamar), was preparing for an act that would bring not only dishonor to his father but also turmoil to the country.

**Verses 10.** Upon hearing the ram's horn, Absalom's supporters were to proclaim, "Absalom has become king in Hebron!" Many Israelites might have been surprised by the news, but because communication in ancient times was often slow and incomplete they would most likely assume David either had died or had appointed Absalom as his successor.

**Verse 11.** Absalom had made the strategic move of inviting two hundred men from Jerusalem to accompany him to Hebron. While they did not support the revolt, once inside the protective walls of Hebron they were in a no-win situation—they could not help David, the legitimate king of Israel, and they would have been killed if they had resisted Absalom.

**Verse 12.** Absalom sent for Ahithophel, who had been an adviser to his father. His joining in the rebellion was a great loss for David and a great victory for Absalom. Furthermore, the number of people supporting Absalom continued to grow and the conspiracy grew strong.

## 2 SAMUEL 15:13-14

**Verse 13.** As the news about Absalom spread throughout the country, David soon heard about it from an informer. This man was apparently loyal to David and probably came to the king when he heard and witnessed what was happening. The men of Israel could be a reference to the army (Judg. 7:23; 20:11,20; 1 Sam. 7:11; 14:24) or simply to citizens. In either case it would have been disturbing for David to learn that those men were now allied with a usurper, his son.

**Verse 14.** Sometimes bad news is not accurate, as was the case when David heard the incorrect report that Absalom had murdered all of his sons (2 Sam. 13:30,32). Still, David knew the rebellion meant his

life could be in danger. Since there were so many unknowns and such a short window of time to take action, David made the decision to flee the city. David was concerned about the loss of life that would occur if Absalom struck the city with the edge of the sword, that is, if fighting broke out in Jerusalem. Perhaps David recalled the massacre many years earlier when all the people and animals in the town of Nob were slaughtered (1 Sam. 22:19) after the priests of the city had aided David as he fled from Saul. David commanded his servants to leave quickly, for if they didn't, none of them would escape Absalom's rapid advance. He fully expected his son to heap disaster on him and those who were loyal to him.

David and his company journeyed beyond the Jordan River where they organized and prepared for battle. The rebellion finally ended when David's forces defeated Absalom's forces. Absalom was killed in the battle and eventually David was restored to the throne of Israel (2 Sam. 18–19).



Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles "Absalom's Struggle for the Throne" (Fall 2008), "Absalom: David's Son" (Summer 2002), and "Parents' Roles in the Ancient World" (Winter 1988) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator). Look for Bundles: Bible Studies for Life.



# Making guests feel welcome

TARRA TAYLOR

Have you ever shown up some place for the first time and no one acknowledged your presence? Perhaps someone said hello to you, but you still felt unaccepted because no one went the extra mile to make you feel a sense

of belonging? As teachers, we should always be cognizant of establishing community within the Sunday School class. In order to grow the body of Christ and our classes, it is imperative that we have a plan in place to

encourage newcomers to return. This plan should be inclusive of learners. Below you will find seven simple ways for you and your learners to make guests feel welcome.

### 1. Send a hand-written card.

Even in our technology-driven world, never underestimate the power of a hand-written note. After a guest attends your class, contact should be made within three to five days. The goal of this note is to extend your gratitude for his or her attendance as well as let the person know you are looking forward to seeing him again. This heartfelt message lets the reader know that he was noticed, making the guest feel valued.

### 2. Create an engaging activity.

Prior to teaching a lesson, create a handout with ten of the big ideas in the lesson. Have learners interview as many different people as possible within a predetermined amount of time to ascertain what others know about the various topics. This activity allows students to come away with knowledge about the day's lesson while building community within the classroom.

### 3. Give a small gift.

A small token of appreciation goes a long way, especially with someone new. Gift bags are simple and inexpensive. Be sure each gift bag includes your contact information as well as contact information for a learner in the class. This way, the guest can reach out to whomever he or she feels more comfortable. Each bag may also include a pen, highlighter, notepad, bookmark, Christian magazine, or any other item you think will make the guest feel more comfortable. A gift shows you thought about her.

### 4. Make a short phone call.

This one small act can be completed by the teacher or learners. Checking on someone to see how the guest is doing can mean the world to that person after a long, hard day of work or school. A phone call brightens one's day and lifts the spirit when done out of love and concern. Focus the call on how you may be of service to the person. If you have a massive number of guests to call, split up the task amongst learners. Picking up the phone doesn't cost us anything but a little time, yet the dividend is well worth it.

### 5. Have a purposeful exit plan.

After class is over, we quickly run to familiar faces. We talk and laugh with those closest to us with no thought of the person who knows absolutely no one in the group. So, be intentional about linking up with someone who has an unfamiliar face. Introduce yourself. Find out his or her interests. What does this person need? What brings him here? Does the person have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Let's ensure that our mingling is intentional by getting to know others.

### 6. Communicate using a first name.

There is nothing more pleasing to the ear than the sound of one's name. Having guests complete a contact card upon entering class can easily give you access to this information. These cards should be kept at your fingertips so that as you give examples and illustrations, you can simply insert the names of guests. You can also invite guests to enter the conversation by using their names. Because names are unique, the use of them welcomes the individual.

### 7. Assign a special role.

There is always something extra that needs to be done at group time. Someone may need to pass out papers, Bibles, or writing utensils. Someone may need to take up the collection or even give a report. No matter the task, in most cases, anyone can do it. Why not let that someone be a guest? Members are special but no more special than our guests, and they need to see and feel this. The appointment of a specific role provides a sense of belonging. As you can see, there are very simple things that can be done to let others know that we notice them. I challenge you to incorporate a few of these strategies into your Sunday School class. Not only will guests feel better, but you will too.

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## BEFORE YOU TEACH

### **Be careful not to politicize the lesson**

Avoid preparing the lesson as a pro-life commentary on the abortion debate. Stay focused on the biblical texts and the title of the lesson. Guide learners to value the dignity of human life as God does.

### **Use variety in teaching**

Prior to class, assign one or two learners different sections from the lesson to present in class, such as “Digging Deeper” or “Did You Know?” Be clear about how much time they will have to make their presentation. Ask another learner to do a brief, five-minute presentation about human-trafficking or euthanasia. This will add variety and creativity to your teaching time.

## LOOK BACK

**SAY:** “Last week, we studied about honoring our parents by showing them respect and by being truthful with them.” Ask volunteers to share lessons learned from “Live It” (p. 27). Remind learners that parents don’t have to be perfect to be honored.

## TEACHING PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

Before learners arrive, write the phrase *All Lives Matter* on a board. Inquire if learners are familiar with the “Black Lives Matter” movement. **Ask:** “What does it mean when we say ‘All Lives Matter’?” Explain that every life matters in the sight of God. Share that honoring life means making people feel valued.

**SUMMARIZE:** Use the first three paragraphs on page 32 to summarize the value God places on lives.

**SAY:** “No matter what people say or how they feel about you, we are all ‘remarkably and wondrously made’” (Ps. 139:14).

**TRANSITION:** To transition into the session read **The Point:** “**Respect human life as God does.**”

## DIG INTO THE TEXT

### **Value What God Values**

#### **// Exodus 20:13**

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 20:13. Direct learners to share their perspectives about the sixth commandment.

**SAY:** “Because every life is precious to God, it should be precious to us as well.”

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for verse 13 (p. 118) to discuss that the sixth commandment is not a broad prohibition against any taking of human life. It refers to the unauthorized taking of life for personal reasons.

**ASK:** “What are some benefits for society when we value human life?”

**RECAP:** Read aloud the following paragraph (p. 32).

*Jesus made it clear in His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount that murder can take other forms. We also aren’t to destroy another’s life through hate or insult.*

**DISCUSS:** Explain that there are more ways to kill others than physical murder. We can cut down a person’s dignity with hateful words, racist actions, and toxic anger.

**READ:** Direct a volunteer to read Matthew 5:21-22. Share that hatred and insult can be as lethal as a bullet.

**DID YOU KNOW?:** Invite the person you enlisted to lead a discussion using “Did You Know?” (p. 35), including asking the question that follows.

**EMPHASIZE:** Remind them that racism has impacted generations of African-Americans in this country, and the fact that the dignity of African-Americans is still often impugned by hateful, insulting, and racist words.

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “Christ has called . . .” (p. 33) to discuss that Jesus taught us a simpler and more effective way to value life. He called us to live a life of love.

**ASK:** “In what ways does loving others help us to honor life?”



## Accept God Is in Control

// 1 Samuel 26:7-11

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 26:7-11.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for verse 7 to set the context and discuss Saul's hatred for David.

**PACK ITEM:** Display **Pack Item 4: Map of David's Story in 1 & 2 Samuel** poster. Identify the places that coincide with this lesson. Use it to also review the next lesson.

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Invite the learner you enlisted to lead a discussion about Abishai (p. 33). Direct that the question that follows also be discussed.

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, "Although Saul . . ." (p. 33). Share that David honored Saul's life by refusing to kill.

**ASK:** "What do David's words and actions reveal about his relationship with God?"

**SAY:** "In refusing to harm Saul, David showed respect for human life as well as honored God who has authority over all life."

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, "God made an important . . ." (p. 34) to discuss that no one is ever justified in murdering another human being.

**ASK:** "How would you explain the truth that God is the ultimate authority over all life?"

**DISCUSS:** Invite the learner you enlisted to share his or her research on human-trafficking or euthanasia.

**ASK:** "What does this say about the way some in our culture value life?"

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins "As kingdom disciples . . ." (p. 34) to emphasize that as believers we need to value life to the best of our ability.

**ASK:** "What can we learn from David's words and actions in this passage?" **Say:** "David teaches us that we honor God when we value life because people are made in God's image."

## Treat Others with Value

// 1 Samuel 26:22-25

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 26:22-25.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for verse 22 to discuss the reason David said the commander and all the men who protected the king deserved to die.

**SAY:** "Whereas Saul did not value the life of David and wanted to kill him, David honored the king by refusing to kill him."

**ASK:** "What does David's conversation with Saul (vv. 22-24) teach us about retaliating against people who do not value our lives and human dignity?"

**READ:** Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins, "Every life bears . . ." (p. 34) to discuss God's stamp in every human being.

**SAY:** "Despite his enmity with the king, David treated Saul's life as valuable as his own." Explain that the value of a person's life is based on God, who created us and loves us despite our behavior.

**DISCUSS:** Refer to the paragraph that begins "David displayed . . ." (p. 35) to discuss David's modeling of the words of the prophet Micah. Then read the points that follow that invites us to consider how to live as David did:

- 1. To act justly toward the innocent and vulnerable and to seek to protect their lives.*
- 2. To love faithfulness by pursuing life and freedom for those who are at risk of losing both.*
- 3. To walk humbly means we "consider others as more important than" ourselves (Phil. 2:3).*

**ASK:** "What are some practical ways we can lift up the value of life before others?" Allow time for discussion.

**SAY:** "Though David was a fierce warrior who shed much blood, he teaches us many lessons about the importance of honoring life."



## CLOSING THE SESSION

**OBJECT LESSON:** Use the “Object Lesson” (p. 118) to memorialize victims of killings in our culture.

Remind learners that though David had the opportunity to kill Saul, he chose to spare the king's life because he wanted to honor what God valued. Emphasize the three points (p. 35) that guide us on how to value life. **Say:** “When we do these things, we will both honor and value life as God intended.” Explain that we will also position ourselves for blessings and rewards when we follow the example David set for us. Encourage learners to prayerfully consider how they can show honor to all life. Challenge them to complete “Live It” on page 35 this week.

**PRAY:** Close with a prayer of supplication. Ask God to continually hold us accountable to value life the way He values life. Pray that the standards of our culture will change to show that we value and love people who are made in the image of God.

## OBJECT LESSON

Before the session, attach several purple ribbons around the classroom to represent the 417 mass killings that occurred in the U.S. in 2019. Put another ribbon on the board for the victims of terrorism around the world. Also, place a candle in front of the room. Ask students to share the name of anyone they know who was a victim of murder or manslaughter. Take a few minutes to pray for the families of those victims. Light the candle as a memorial for those victims. Remind learners that though death is inevitable, we should value human life as God does.



## COMMENTARY

### EXODUS 20:13

**Verse 13.** The sixth commandment is not a broad prohibition against any type of taking of human life. It refers to unauthorized taking of human life for personal reasons. In the Old Testament, the term was also used to refer to a person who slew another accidentally and then fled to cities of refuge (Num. 35:6; Josh. 20). However, apart from that exception, the term is used in Scripture exclusively in reference to the malicious, intentional action to kill an innocent person—premeditated murder.

The crime of murder relates in part to human beings being made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6). God also made a distinction between murder and killing as the prescribed penalty for various crimes. God commanded the Israelites to put to death those who committed crimes such as murder (Ex. 21:12), adultery (Lev. 20:10), idolatry (Ex. 22:20), and human sacrifice (Lev. 20:1-5). God also allowed for the taking of human life in specific cases: in certain instances killing another person in war was allowable (Deut. 13:15; 1 Sam. 15:3) and some other killings were authorized (such as avenging a death in certain situations—Num. 35:19).

Valuing human life includes our attitudes as well as our actions (Matt. 5:21-22). Thus we can also violate this commandment when we show disregard for human life through racism, discrimination, defamation, or other hateful attitudes and actions.

### 1 SAMUEL 26:7-11

**Verse 7.** David was on the run from King Saul for several years. On one occasion David was living in the wilderness of Ziph, which was in the Judean hill country. Informed of David's presence, Saul set out with three thousand soldiers to kill David (1 Sam. 26:1-2).

When David learned of Saul's presence, he sent scouts out to confirm it (26:3-4). When it was dark and Saul's party was asleep, David approached Saul's camp. Abishai, David's nephew (1 Chron. 2:13-16),

volunteered to accompany David in sneaking into an enemy camp. The two men quietly made their way through the sleeping soldiers to the center of the camp, where Saul was sleeping. Sleeping near the king was Abner, the king's cousin who was also commander of the army (14:50).

**Verse 8.** Abishai requested permission to take care of David's problem. He would thrust the spear, perhaps the king's own spear, through Saul's body and into the ground.

**Verse 9.** David, however, would not allow Abishai to carry out his plan because Saul was the LORD's anointed. While David had also been anointed king by Samuel (16:12-13), he wanted to remain innocent in God's sight—not be liable for God's judgment because of sin.

**Verse 10.** David expressed his trust in God's sovereignty. In refusing to harm Saul, David showed respect for human life as well as honoring God who has authority over all life. David was certain that God, in whatever way and time He determined, would bring about the king's eventual death.

**Verse 11.** David reiterated his vow that he would never do anything to injure Saul, the LORD's anointed. Then David commanded Abishai to get Saul's spear and the water jug by his head. After securing these personal items, the two men left Saul's camp.

## 1 SAMUEL 26:22-25

**Verse 22.** After leaving the camp, David shouted to Abner, the king's general. David noted the king's missing spear and water jug and said the commander (and all the soldiers with him) deserved to die because he had not protected Saul, the Lord's anointed (1 Sam. 26:14-16). David emphasized his insignificance and declared he was innocent of any wrongdoing against the king. Saul then confessed his sin and noted his foolishness. He then vowed he would never harm David again and he asked David to "come back" (1 Sam. 26:21). Though David would not go over to the king, he held up the king's spear and offered to return it if one of Saul's young men (perhaps a servant) would come over and get it.

**Verses 23-24.** David declared he was innocent of any wrongdoing related to Saul. God alone has authority over human life, therefore He should be the one to decree if or when a life can be taken. David asked that God would treat him as he had treated Saul. David didn't presume upon God, but he knew the Lord respects human life and thus asked God to value his life. David also asked the Lord to "rescue me from all trouble." This was confidence in the Lord's character and ability, which David had known throughout his life.

**Verse 25.** Addressing David as "my son," Saul spoke a blessing on David. While Saul declared that David would do great things, this time he did not mention his certainty that David would be king, as he had said after the incident in the cave (24:20). Yet there may be an allusion to David's future role as Saul noted David would prevail, that is, triumph or be victorious. After these words, the two men left to go their separate ways.



Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles "Saul: Israel's Failed King" (Summer 2019), "Rape, Murder, and Ancient Jewish Law" (Summer 2018), "David as an Outlaw" (Fall 2008), and "Abner: Saul's General" (Winter 2003–2004) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator). Look for Bundles: Bible Studies for Life.

## BEFORE YOU TEACH

### ***Commit to a covenant with your eyes***

Job said, “I have made a covenant with my eyes. How then could I look at a young woman?” (Job 31:1). Obtain enough index cards for each learner. Prepare a statement to be used in making a covenant, such as: “I promise to refrain from looking at the opposite sex lustfully, and to avoid watching anything that may trigger lustful thoughts.” Learners will covenant to honor their current or future relationships.

### ***Connect with an older married couple***

Interview an older married couple in your family or in your church who has a godly marriage. Ask specific questions about what they have done to cultivate the sacredness of their marriage through the years. Request permission to share the interview in class.

## LOOK BACK

Invite learners to share successes or failures in the application of “Live It” (p. 35) this week. Remind learners that because God values life, Christians should also value human life as God does. Inquire about ways that the lesson has influenced learners’ relationship and interaction with other people.

## TEACHING PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

**ASK:** “Whose marriage have you always admired?”

**GUIDE:** Use the first two paragraphs on page 38 to introduce the nature of a covenant relationship between one man and one woman in marriage.

**SAY:** “When unfaithfulness occurs in a marriage, know that God is a God of forgiveness and restoration.” **Ask:** “What should a person do if tempted to step outside of a marriage?”

**TRANSITION:** Read **The Point: “Physical intimacy is reserved for one man and woman within the covenant of marriage”** to transition into the session.

## DIG INTO THE TEXT

### **Be Faithful // Exodus 20:14**

Begin by asking one of the married learners to share or summarize his or her marriage vow. Invite learners to comment on the wedding vow.

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read Exodus 20:14.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for verse 14 (p. 122) to discuss sexual immorality, including adultery, in the Old Testament.

**SAY:** “Adultery is not just a violation of physical intimacy within marriage, it is a violation of the trust that is essential for the oneness that God intends to take place between a husband and a wife, according to Genesis 2:24.”

**ASK:** “How would you summarize our culture’s view of adultery?”

**EMPHASIZE:** The chemical bond between a man and woman in marriage serves a greater purpose than pleasure. (Refer to the paragraph on page 38 that begins “Within the physical . . .”)

**READ:** Recruit two learners to read the paragraphs that begin, “Adultery damages . . .” and “Adultery—physical . . .” (pp. 38-39) to discuss the damage caused by adultery.

**ASK:** “Whose marriage do you think symbolizes ‘honor and protect’?” Share the information from the older couple you interviewed.

**DID YOU KNOW?:** Invite a learner to read “Did You Know?” (p. 41) and ask the question that follows.

**DISCUSS:** Use the paragraphs that begin “Science confirms . . .” and “When a person . . .” (p. 39) to further discuss the physiological and emotional trauma experienced during sexual intimacy and the reason we should guard our hearts.

**READ:** Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins, “We guard our hearts . . .” (p. 39) to discuss Jesus’ focus on the heart.

**SAY:** “It is in the heart that the sin of adultery is first conceived.” Share with learners that Jesus said in Matthew 15:19, “For from the heart come evil

thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander.”

**ASK:** “What are the benefits for a society following God’s standards for purity and marriage?”

**OBJECT LESSON:** Use the “Object Lesson” (p. 122) to invite learners to fireproof their current or future marriages.

### **Guard Your Thoughts // 2 Samuel 11:1-3a**

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read 2 Samuel 11:1-3a.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for verse 1 (p. 123) to set the context for these verses.

**ASK:** “What is David’s biggest mistake in these verses?”

**READ:** Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins “David’s life is . . .” (p. 39) to explain that David provides an example of what happens when our thoughts are not guarded by faithfulness and purity.

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Enlist a learner to read “Digging Deeper” (p. 39) and ask the question that follows: “Why do you think David lacked the strength to resist the temptation to commit adultery?”

**READ:** Enlist a learner to read the paragraph that begins, “If we don’t . . .” (pp. 39-40) to explain that only our spouses should know the more intimate details about us.

**SAY:** “Guarding the honor of marriage within a covenantal marriage requires effective communication, prayer, selfless love for our spouse, and obedience to God’s Word.”

**READ:** Invite three learners to read: Psalm 25:14; Isaiah 43:10; and Isaiah 45:3. (See p. 40.)

**ASK:** “What are some practical ways we can follow God’s command to be faithful and pure?”

**EMPHASIZE:** “Because a covenantal marriage is a triangular relationship between a husband, a wife, and God, any adulterous act is an affront to God with grave consequences.”

### **Watch Out for Others // 2 Samuel 11:3b-5**

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read 2 Samuel 11:3b-5.

**SAY:** “When David was told Bathsheba was a married woman, he should have honored her marital status and not sleep with her.” Share with learners that they not only have to honor their marriages, but they are obligated to honor the marriages of others as well.

**READ:** Recruit a learner to read the paragraph that begins, “David set aside . . .” (p. 40). Lead learners to discuss some practical ways for Christians to honor the covenants and commitments of others. Remind learners about what Joseph did in Genesis 39:12 when he ran away from Potiphar’s wife, who was trying to force him to sleep with her.

**SAY:** “We must do all that is within our power to resist committing adultery.”

**READ:** Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins, “We can argue . . .” (p. 40) to discuss David’s motive and the Hebrew words used for “know.”

**ASK:** “What steps can we take to prevent falling into the trap of adultery?”

**RECAP:** Read aloud the following from page 41:

*When sex is self-seeking, it brings many emotional, physical, and spiritual consequences. Guarding marriage from adultery starts by creating a true connection of love, honor, and romance between both spouses and nurturing the love-relationship. Honoring marriage produces lives that are pleasing to God and brings us the greatest satisfaction and joy.*

## CLOSE THE SESSION

**ASK:** “What is one thing you will do to honor your marriage and/or the marriages of others?”

Remind learners to guard their hearts against lust, pornography, or inappropriate feelings toward others. Distribute an index card to each learner. Invite them to write the covenant statement you have prepared. Direct them to date and sign it, then keep it as a reminder to guard their eyes and heart. Encourage learners to do the “Daily Readings” throughout the following week with their spouses, if they are married. Also encourage them to do “Live It” on page. 41.

**PRAY:** Ask God to bless the marriages in your group. Ask Him to provide an extra measure of strength because of the many cultural temptations that work against a happy marriage.

## OBJECT LESSON

Before class download a PDF of “The Love Dare: 40 Days Love Challenge” and make copies for each learner. (Go to [YOU.com](http://YOU.com) for the PDF.)

**SAY:** “God is so serious about the purity of the marital bed that He made it a commandment. To honor that commandment, we need to fireproof our marriages.”

**ASK:** “Did anyone see the movie *Fireproof*?” Invite volunteers to provide a summary of the movie. Share any steps you have taken to fireproof your own marriage. Distribute copies of the “Love Dare” PDF. Invite learners to use it to fireproof their marriages or relationships. Remind learners that the vows made during the marriage ceremony between the man and the woman are also a vow to God.



## COMMENTARY

### EXODUS 20:14

**Verse 14.** All forms of sexual immorality are condemned by God. One Hebrew word (*zanah*) can refer both to prostitution (Lev. 19:29) and fornication (Num. 25:1). While there is no specific Hebrew word for homosexuality, the Old Testament does address the issue of “a man [who] sleeps with a man as with a woman” (Lev. 20:13) and condemns this type of sexual deviation (18:22).

The Hebrew word *na’af* refers specifically to adultery in the Old Testament. It is used in both a literal and a figurative sense. The figurative uses are usually found in the prophets (such as Jer. 3:8; 5:7; Ezek. 23:37), where they refer to the people of Israel worshiping idols. However, *na’af* refers literally to marital infidelity. Such infidelity can happen because of prostitution, fornication, homosexuality, pornography, and other sexual sins.

Adultery violates the trust that is essential for the bonding (especially emotionally and psychologically) that God intends to take place between a wife and a husband.<sup>1</sup> Trust is essential for all good human relationships. When trust between people never develops or is destroyed, then the society suffers. This is because people cannot have meaningful relationships with others they don’t trust. While there is no biblical command for a person to marry rather than to remain single, marriage is commanded by God for the propagation of the human race (Gen. 1:28) and is essential for growing healthy, godly families and communities. Since trust is essential for the marriage relationship, anything that jeopardizes trust (such as adultery) must be avoided.

The Book of Proverbs notes the “great stupidity” (Prov. 5:23) of a man who commits adultery. Such an individual “lacks sense” and “destroys himself” (6:32). Proverbs 6 also speaks of the revenge that will be enacted by an enraged husband toward a man who commits adultery with his wife (vv. 33-35).



## 2 SAMUEL 11:1-3A

**Verse 1.** After becoming king over all Israel, David set out to strengthen and expand the kingdom. He led Israel in battles with several neighboring countries who were hostile to the Israelites. One year the Israelites had been insulted by the Ammonites and thus God's people went to war against Ammon. The king of Ammon hired soldiers to help them battle the Israelites, but Israel defeated these mercenary soldiers and caused the Ammonites to retreat to Rabbah, their fortified capital city. Then the Israelite army returned home (2 Sam. 10).

During the winter months (the rainy season) in the Middle East, conflict between nations was minimal because travel was difficult and food was not as readily available for military personnel and their animals. In the spring of the year, however, conditions changed and armies would march out to war. Thus at that time David sent Israel's army to besiege Rabbah. For some reason, David remained in Jerusalem.

**Verses 2-3a.** One evening David got up from his bed and strolled around on the roof of the palace. David's residence in Jerusalem was on one of the highest points of the city. The flat roof would have allowed him to look down on the houses and other structures in the city. As David looked around at all the people and places of his city one particular woman caught his eye. Perhaps because of the heat, this woman was bathing outside, possibly in a private courtyard. He recognized the woman was very beautiful. David's desires began to take root, thus he sinned against God starting with his thoughts. Rather than turning away from his sin and seeking God's forgiveness, David sent someone to inquire about her.

## 2 SAMUEL 11:3B-5

**Verse 3b.** David learned that the woman was Bathsheba, whom David may have known because she was the daughter of Eliam, who was one of David's most valiant and dependable soldiers—those warriors often referred to as David's mighty men, of the group known as “the Thirty.” Bathsheba's husband was Uriah the Hethite (Hittite), who was another of David's mighty men (23:39).

**Verse 4.** David gave full reign to his lust as he sent

messengers to get her. Scripture is silent as to whether Bathsheba willingly came to the palace or had any knowledge of why David had called for her. But the biblical text (especially Nathan's condemnation of David in the next chapter) clearly indicates that David was the one who did wrong when he had sexual relations with her.

The almost parenthetical notation that Bathsheba had just been purifying herself from her uncleanness supports the assertion that the bath she had been taking outside her house was a ceremonial cleansing following her monthly period (see Lev. 15:19 and the above comments on 2 Sam. 11:2). After their sexual encounter, Bathsheba returned home.

**Verse 5.** There was obviously an interval of time between the first part of this verse and the last part. Bathsheba conceived. Bathsheba sent word to inform the king: “I am pregnant.” Her pregnancy couldn't have come from her husband because he was away at war. David's response set in motion a series of events in which he tried to cover up one sin with more sins—including the murder of Bathsheba's husband (see 2 Sam. 11). But the cover-up ultimately failed. Through the prophet Nathan, God confronted and judged David for his sin (12:1-19).



1 Douglas K. Stuart, Exodus, vol. 2, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 463–64. Read the article “Adultery: A Biblical Overview” in the Fall 2020 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*.

Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles “Joab, A Man After His Own Heart” (Summer 2018), “When Kings March Out to War: Warfare and Weather” (Summer 2019), “The ‘Great Sin’: Adultery in the Ancient Near East” (Fall 2008), and “King's Privileges or King's Crimes?” (Winter 2003–2004) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator). Look for Bundles: Bible Studies for Life.

## BEFORE YOU TEACH

### Connect the lessons

The central focus of this study on the Ten Commandments has been honor. Take some time to review the previous five lessons. Prepare to connect all the sessions and their implication for having a right relationship with God and with others. Challenge learners to practice honor in all their relationships.

### Express appreciation

Send a thank-you card to every learner and class worker. Let them know you are thankful for their participation and for helping to make the class exciting. Encourage learners to consider volunteering or helping in some way for the next study.

## LOOK BACK

**SAY:** “Last week we talked about reserving physical intimacy for one man and woman within the covenant of marriage.” Refer to “Live It” (p. 41) and ask learners what ways have they found to honor your or others’ marriages during the past week. Remind learners to guard their hearts to avoid the trap of adultery.

## TEACHING PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

Ask learners what do the words *integrity* and *contentment* mean. **Say:** “Remember the days when people’s word was their bond? Unfortunately, because of numerous scandals in the church, many people question the integrity of Christian institutions and do not trust our motives.” Read Philippians 4:8, and tell learners of the necessity for Christians to live with integrity as ambassadors of Christ. Point out that contentment comes from an attitude of gratitude. Share with them that Christ calls us to live to a higher standard as ambassadors of His kingdom.

**TRANSITION:** Use **The Point: “Integrity and contentment in Christ form the foundation for good relationships”** to transition into the session.

## DIG INTO THE TEXT

### Watch Your Speech and Actions

#### // Exodus 20:15-16

**ASK:** “Who has been an example of personal integrity in your life?”

**SUMMARIZE:** Use the first three paragraphs of this study (p. 44) to compare the implosion of a building with a lack of integrity.

**READ:** Invite a learner to read the paragraphs that begin “A preacher boarded . . .” and “The bus driver . . .” (p. 44). Remind learners of their definition of the word *integrity*.

**ASK:** “Why is it so important for believers to be people of integrity?”

**READ:** Invite a learner to read Exodus 20:15-16.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for verses 15-16 (p. 126) to explain what it means to “steal” and to give “false testimony.” In light of these definitions, lead learners to discuss the reason integrity is the foundation for good relationships.

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins “Integrity ought to . . .” (pp. 44-45) to explain that Christians are to live with a higher standard than the world. Challenge them to do everything with integrity since they do not know who is watching.

**SUMMARIZE:** Share with learners that “Being honorable is at the heart of the Ten Commandments: ‘Do not steal’ and ‘Do not give false testimony your neighbor.’ Refer to the paragraph that begins “Being honorable . . .” (p. 45) to explain.

**ASK:** “What are the consequences for society when people do not live with honesty and integrity?” Remind them of what Jesus said in Matthew 5:37, “Let your ‘yes’ mean ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’ mean ‘no.’”

### Be Content // Exodus 20:17

**READ:** Invite a learner to read Exodus 20:17.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for verse 17 (pp. 126-127) to explain that the tenth commandment deals more with attitude than with action. Explain that

coveting is a sinful attitude that is prompted by greed. Remind them that one of the best ways to combat covetousness is with contentment.

**READ:** Enlist a learner to read the paragraph that begins, “Aesop’s Fables include . . .” (p. 45), and **say:** “The dog in Aesop’s fable teaches a lesson on the danger of coveting.”

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Invite a learner to read “Digging Deeper” (p. 45) about the sin of Achan, and ask the question: “How does the sin of coveting challenge our integrity?”

**SAY:** “The tenth commandment is applicable to all relationships and in every area of life.”

**OBJECT LESSON:** Use the “Object Lesson” (p. 126) to awaken learners to the reality of covetous behavior in our everyday lives.

**ASK:** “What are some practical steps we can take to avoid discontentment in our lives?” Remind learners that contentment is not situational or circumstantial. Instead, it reflects our desire to honor God for His providential love.

**RECAP:** Read the following from pages 45-46:

*Contentment is:*

- *Being just as happy driving an old hooptie as driving a new Mercedes®. Both are transportation.*
- *Being fine with living in an 800-square-foot apartment as in a four-thousand-square-foot house. Both are housing.*
- *Enjoying a hot dog as much as a T-bone steak. Both are food.*
- *Being just as satisfied wearing thrift store clothing as wearing a designer outfit. Both are clothes.*

**EMPHASIZE:** Share what Paul said about contentment in Philippians 4:11-13. Explain that the secret to contentment is knowing all we have is from Christ.

## Trust in the Lord // Psalm 37:1-6

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read Psalm 37:1-6. Share

with learners that the language of this psalm reflects contentment and gratitude. Point out that David warned God’s people, and us, not to envy others. Instead, we are to have confidence in who God is and what He does.

**READ:** Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins, “David captures . . .” (p. 46).

**ASK:** “How would you summarize David’s challenge in Psalm 37:1-6?”

**GUIDE:** Reread verse 3, then use the commentary for verse 3 (p. 127) to explain what it means to trust the Lord.

**DID YOU KNOW?:** Invite a learner to read “Did You Know?” about 40 acres and a mule and ask the question that follows: “How do you think this occurrence may have impacted the African-American’s trust in God?”

**EMPHASIZE:** The right to own personal property may have been taken away from African-Americans, but history reveals their trust in God has not faltered.

**SAY:** “When we honor God with our trust in His providential love, He will give us the desires of our hearts (v. 4).”

**ASK:** “What evidence have you seen that God’s commands are for our own good?”

**EMPHASIZE:** Remind learners to be careful not to covet what other people have because they do not know what these people did to get what they have. Share that believers are striving to receive an imperishable crown (1 Cor. 9:25).

**READ:** Enlist a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins, “This means none . . .” (p. 47). Lead learners to discuss the reason Christians should not focus on the accomplishments of others.

**SAY:** “Whereas it is human nature to desire success and fruitfulness, we have to leave it to God and trust that He can do ‘above and beyond all that we ask or think’ (Eph. 3:20).”

## CLOSING THE SESSION

Connect all the sessions in this study on the Ten Commandments. Explain that practicing what we have learned in this study as a whole will strengthen our relationship with God and with other believers.

**ASK:** “What difference has this study on the Ten Commandments made in your personal life?”

Direct learners’ attention to “Live It” (p. 47). Remind learners that their integrity impacts their testimony.

**PRAY:** Pray a prayer of thanksgiving. Thank God for His Word that guides us in right living. Ask Him to strengthen us to obey all of His commands.

## OBJECT LESSON

Bring some local real estate brochures to class. Pass them around and ask students if the brochures help them to understand what it means to “covet your neighbor’s or friend’s house.”

**SAY:** “The advent of social media has added even more to this issue.” Explain that as people began to reconnect online, some interesting things began to happen. It has led to pride and envy in many cases and maybe some covetousness attitudes. It also has given a false impression that many people “had it going on” when in reality their lives were just as much a struggle as the rest of us.

**ASK:** “How has sharing our lives on social media sites like Facebook led to: Stealing by trying to be like others or better? False testimony by embellishing facts about our lives? Covetousness by wanting what others have, whether it’s houses, cars, kids, wives, jobs, fill-in-the-blank?”



## COMMENTARY

### EXODUS 20:15-16

**Verse 15.** The eighth commandment is written with just two Hebrew words, which can be translated “never steal” or “no stealing.” To steal includes taking, keeping, or using something that does not belong to us. Certainly theft involves the taking of possessions, but it can also refer to stealing persons (kidnapping; Ex. 21:16), or damaging someone else’s property, as well as defrauding someone. Through these actions, the thief in some way deprives the person of the use of an item or diminishes the item’s value. Thus this command involves a broad respect for everything that belongs to another person. Further laws against stealing are found in Exodus 22:1-16; Leviticus 6:2-5; 19:11,13; and Deuteronomy 24:7.

**Verse 16.** The ninth commandment uses words that are more at home in a legal setting, such as a courtroom. It relates specifically to perjury (false testimony), where a witness lies about a person or event, especially in a legal setting, often after swearing an oath to tell the truth. The command against giving false testimony is important for the stability of any society, because there will be disputes between people and charges against others. These disputes require a person or persons (for example, a judge and/or jury) to render a decision about who is at fault and/or who is telling the truth. Other Mosaic laws (such as Lev. 5:1; Deut. 19:18) elaborate on this false testimony, which can include not only telling a lie about another person but also withholding pertinent facts that can help a judge determine the truth of an accusation.

The reference to a neighbor did not mean God’s people were allowed to give false witness against non-Israelites. It has the sense of anyone else a person might have interaction with. Ultimately it related to any person they encountered.

### EXODUS 20:17

**Verse 17.** The tenth commandment deals more with attitude than with action—with what is internal rather

than external. In this final word God commanded His people to find contentment in what He provides. The Hebrew word for covet (*chamad*) means desiring, craving, or wanting something. The Hebrew word is neutral—it can refer to something positive (“pleasing,” Gen. 2:9; “desirable,” Ps. 19:10) as well as something negative. The negative context is clear in this verse where it means longing for something that belongs to someone else, and God gave examples including a neighbor’s house . . . wife . . . servant . . . ox or donkey. The term for “house” also carries the meanings of family or property. When God gave this command the former slaves certainly had no houses, and it’s also uncertain whether they had servants. Still, God was looking to the future when the Israelites would be settled in the land of Canaan. While God mentioned several things that could be the object of covetousness, this was not an exhaustive list. Thus God clarified that they were not to covet anything that belongs to your neighbor. As with the previous command, the use of neighbor in this verse refers to any other person, not just someone living in close proximity. Implicit in this command is that God allows people to own things.

While the violation of the tenth commandment may not be evident to others, it is obvious to God, who “sees the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). The sinful nature of covetousness (“greedy person”) is emphasized in the New Testament, which equates it with idolatry (Eph. 5:5). Covetousness is ultimately a sin against God because it reflects a dissatisfaction with what He has provided.

## PSALM 37:1-6

**Verses 1-2.** Believers are not to get agitated because of wicked people. Nor are they to envy evil doers. David warned God’s people not to envy those who do wrong, who did not follow or obey God. Like vegetation that thrives temporarily, wicked people flourish for a while (at least from a worldly perspective), but soon enough they experience their ultimate outcome of God’s judgment for their sins.

**Verse 3.** Trust in God entails dependence upon Him (rather than ourselves) and confidence in who God is

and what He does. This involves placing our hope in and seeking our security in God alone. In addition to trusting God, God’s people are to do what is good. Though the wicked do what they want—following their sinful desires—we should be committed to obeying God’s words and His ways.

**Verse 4.** When we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us our heart’s desires. When we truly delight in the Lord we will also delight in His will; we will want what God wants, and we will see God fulfill His will in our lives.

**Verse 5.** When we commit ourselves to the Lord we entrust every part of our lives to Him. This same activity is what Peter envisioned when he wrote, “casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

**Verse 6.** God will ultimately vindicate all who trust in, delight in, and commit themselves to Him when He makes their righteousness shine like the dawn. God’s justice will be clearly and brightly displayed through His people. Thus we must learn to be content, not only with what God provides for us but also with when and how He works for our ultimate good.



Read the article “Theft in the Ancient Near East” in the Fall 2020 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*.

Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles “The Secret Sin: Coveting” (Summer 2014), “Theft in the Ancient Near East” (Summer 2014), “Truth in Witness” (Fall 1999), and “Covet: The Meaning” (Fall 1998) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator). Look for Bundles: Bible Studies for Life.





THE GREATNESS OF OUR GOD

LIES IN THE FACT THAT

HE IS BOTH TOUGHMINDED

AND TENDERHEARTED.

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**