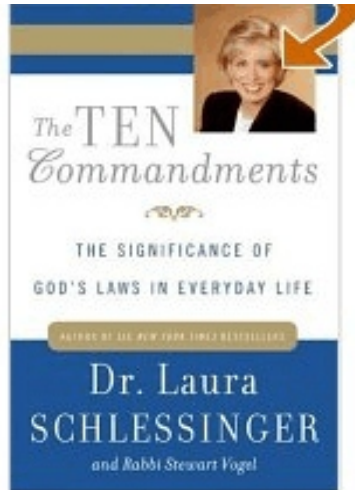


# The Ten Commandments

This series of home group lessons has been derived from the book *The Ten Commandments* by Dr. Laura Schlessinger. Each lesson is designed to give insight into how one of the commandments should play out in our everyday lives. The book is definitely worth reading. We hope this series will be a blessing.



## Theme: The Ten Commandments

### Lesson 1. The Authority of God

**To the teacher:** After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

#### Read Exodus 20:1-17

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment:** *“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”* (Exodus 20:2).

Throughout history people have struggled to be free from tyranny, enslavement, and dictatorial control. Most teenagers are in the process of struggling to be free from their parents control so they can do whatever they want, whenever they want to. Freedom from external control is important because it allows us to explore the farthest reaches of our individual human possibilities. But there must be certain limits to our freedom.

The flip side of the freedom coin is responsibility. This means that we are all free to do what we please but within certain limits—like a dog that is free to run around within the limits of the fence that surrounds the back yard. The question then arises: Who defines the fence for us? How do we know what is right and what is wrong? How do we determine what is acceptable and what is not? This is where the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment comes in.

#### Read Romans 1:28

A famous Russian writer once said, “Where there is no God, all is permitted.” When people want to exercise their freedom either without any limits at all or according to the limits that they think are okay, they find themselves not wanting to even think about God. But the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment reminds us that it was God Himself who gave us our freedom, who “brought us out of the house of bondage”—therefore, He is the only one who has the right to determine the limits of our freedom. This is called “the authority of God.”

It is important for us to understand that God claims authority over our lives by virtue of the fact that He has saved us. In other words, if He had not taken the initiative to set us free (as He did for the Israelites in Egypt), we would have no freedom at all and would still be in bondage. So let’s not think of God setting limits in our lives as a King or a Judge, but as a Savior.

#### Read Luke 6:46-49

Without a full acceptance of the authority of God, the rest of the Ten

Commandments become little more than suggestions or good ideas. Our ultimate motivation for accepting God’s authority should be our appreciation for our salvation and deliverance. The 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment charges each one of us to demonstrate our gratitude for God’s saving grace through the way we live our lives.

#### Read 1 John 5:3

Let us accept right from the beginning of this study that it is not a hard or burdensome thing to keep the commandments of God. The key is truly appreciating the greatness of the salvation He has brought to us.

#### Discussion Questions:

- 96 percent of Americans say they believe in God. If this is true, then why is there so much crime and immorality in our country?
  - Apparently many people who say they believe in God do not accept His authority over their lives.
  - Some people may be ignorant of God’s commandments.
- Does accepting God’s authority over our lives mean we must give up our personal freedom?
  - No, we always retain our freedom to choose.
  - Even when we submit our will to God, He does not take away our will.
- Tell about a time when you did not submit to God’s authority because you were ignorant of His commandments.
- Tell about a time when you willfully did not submit to God’s authority even though you knew what He required.
- What are the benefits of yielding to the authority of God? Give a Bible reference.
  - Psalms 1:1-3; Psalms 94:12-13; Psalms 112:1-2; 1 John 3:22; Matthew 19:17; Revelations 22:14

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment teaches us that we need to respect God’s authority.**

## Theme: The Ten Commandments

### **Lesson 2. The Image of God**

**To the teacher:** After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment:** *“You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments”* (Exodus 20:3-6).

“Mommy, Daddy, what does God look like?” Many children have asked their parents this question and many parents have been perplexed as to how to answer. After all, the Bible does speak of the “face of God” and the “hand of the Lord.” But these terms are understood to be metaphorical (word pictures); they do not mean that we can understand what God actually looks like. The pagan nations that lived around the nation of Israel had many gods, which they worshiped in the form of statues and totem poles. But the Israelites were instructed to worship only the one true God.

#### Read John 4:24

Jesus tells us that the one true God is “Spirit.” How do you draw a picture of Spirit? Jesus described the Spirit as being like the wind (John 3:8). The pagan nations carved images of people and animals to represent their gods, but how do you carve an image of the wind?

#### Read John 1:18

No one has ever seen God as the Spirit. But Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, has declared Him—that is, Jesus is the only picture we have of the one true God.

#### Colossians 1:15

The word translated “image” in this verse can also refer to a portrait. Jesus is the portrait of the invisible God.

#### Read John 14:8-9

The only way to see the invisible God is by looking at His earthly portrait, Jesus Christ.

#### Read Isaiah 40:18

Nothing else in the entire universe is like the one true God. He is unique. And the only image we have of Him is Jesus. Therefore, any other image is false and is not the Truth. When God made man in His own image, He was revealing His intent for our lives—that we would speak and act like Him, that we would be like Jesus. When we worship false gods, we never have to rise above ourselves. This is because the false gods are all merely extensions of human qualities. They enable us to justify our own weaknesses and carnal desires. But when we worship the true God, we are challenged to become better people.

God cares about us and wants us to be better people. He does not want us to keep on hurting ourselves by our own weaknesses and shortcomings. This is why He condemns the worship of all false gods. He also warns that the gods we worship will not only effect our own peace and happiness, but will also have an effect on our children and grandchildren.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Why do we tend to want to be like the people we look up to?
  - We usually want to have for ourselves whatever we really like or admire.
2. Can you think of someone you imitated as a young person because you really admired him? Who was it? In what ways did you imitate him?
  - Maybe someone who really liked Michael Jordan started playing basketball.
  - Maybe someone who really liked some rock star grew his hair long or started playing the guitar.
3. Can you think of something you imitated that ended up causing you pain or getting you in trouble?
  - Maybe there was someone at school whom you thought was really cool but who liked to steal from stores. Maybe when you stole something you got caught and the police were called.
4. What are some of the modern day “false gods” and which ones do you need to get out of your life so you can focus more of the one true God?
  - TV, movies, sports, material things, jobs, vacations, etc.
  - Maybe less time watching sports and more time reading the Bible?
5. What specific areas in your life would you like to see become more like Jesus?
  - More kindness toward my wife; more dedicated to winning souls.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment teaches us that we need to become like God.**

## Theme: The Ten Commandments

### **Lesson 3. Glorifying God's Name**

**To the teacher:** After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment:** "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain"(Exodus 20:7).

#### **Read Philippians 2:9-11**

The name Jesus is the highest name there is. No other name is greater, more powerful, or more holy. God expects His people to show great honor and respect to His name.

What does it mean to "take the name of the Lord?" In the New Testament, it refers to our baptism in water "in the name of Jesus Christ." When we are baptized, God places His name upon us. From that point on, we bear the name of Jesus with us everywhere we go. It is as though we are carrying a flag that says, "I belong to Jesus!" This means that once we are baptized, the way we live our lives will have an impact on whether people respect the name of Jesus or use it as a curse.

#### **Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12**

God's plan is that His name would be glorified "in us." This happens as we speak and act in holy ways. When we do what is right and good, we have power to inspire others to goodness. When we do what is wrong or evil, especially when we do it in front of other people, we provide a negative influence that diminishes righteousness in the world. This is to take the Lord's name "in vain."

The word "vain" means emptiness or uselessness. In other words, taking the name of the Lord in vain means to fail to live up to the holy purpose to which we are called. God sees those who fail in this way as empty and useless.

#### **Read Romans 2:23-24**

We dishonor God when we fail to keep His commandments and cause His name to be cursed. It is a great honor to be chosen to bear the name of Jesus. We ought to do our best to live up to our calling.

#### **Read James 2:7-11**

This passage links mistreating other people to cursing the name of Jesus. We honor God by honoring one another.

#### **Read Revelation 16:9**

When men's hearts are hard, they strike out against God's name and curse Him. But what they need to do is repent and give glory to His name.

#### **Read Leviticus 24:15-16**

\_\_\_ Under the law, it was a serious matter to misuse God's name. Even more so today, the name Jesus is to be held in the highest regard. It is not to be taken lightly or used carelessly. When we say the name Jesus, we should say it with the deepest reverence and respect. But even more important than the way we speak is the way we live our lives. We must remember that whatever we say or do will bring either honor or dishonor to this name that we hold so dear. Those who do not live up to the commitment of their baptism will not be held guiltless; that is, they will be found guilty of taking the name of the Lord in vain.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Tell about a time when your name was published in a newspaper. How did it make you feel?
2. How would it make you feel if someone signed your name on a check or other official document without your permission?
3. Proverbs 22:1 says, "*A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches.*" Why is a good name so important and what can we do to have a good name?
  - Our name represents us. To have a good name means to be well thought of, to have a good reputation.
  - We can establish a good name for ourselves by being kind, honest, concerned, hard-working, etc.
4. Hebrews 11:16 speaks of those whom "God is not ashamed to be called their God." Why would God be ashamed to be called the God of some people?
  - Some people who claim to walk with God do things that God does not want to be associated with.
5. What areas of your life are not glorifying the name of Jesus as much as they should?

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment teaches us that God expects us to live our lives in such a way that His name will be glorified.**

## Theme: The Ten Commandments

### **Lesson 4. The Value of Time**

**To the teacher:** After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

**The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment:** “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:8-11).

The purpose of the Sabbath day was to provide the people with a break from their daily labors and give them an opportunity to reflect of the greatness of the God who created them. It was a specific period of time set aside by God as a blessing for the people.

#### **Read Mark 2:23-28**

The law of the Sabbath has been misunderstood by many people. The important thing to know is that God intended to bless the people, not put them in bondage. It is also important to know that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. This means that whatever He tells us to do on the Sabbath is lawful. Jesus can't break His own law.

#### **Read Colossians 2:16-17**

We are no longer under the Sabbath law; it was fulfilled when Jesus came. This means that we do not set aside one day a week for God, instead we set aside every day. For the Christian, every day is the Sabbath day. We don't serve Him one day a week, we serve Him seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. He is the Lord of every day.

#### **Read Romans 13:11**

The real significance of the Sabbath day is the value God places on time. Time is life, and what we do with our time determines what we do with our life. God doesn't want us to waste away our time; He wants us to use it to serve Him. Every day that goes by, the coming of the Lord gets closer and we have less time available to accomplish the things God wants us to accomplish.

#### **Read 1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

God understands that we are emotional people. Sometimes we are sad and sometimes we are glad. He also understands that many of us have spouses and possessions, and He is certainly not opposed to these things. But in this passage God is telling us that we may need to rise above our emotions and not let our spouses or possessions keep us from doing what God wants us to do. In the end, the only thing that will matter is what we have accomplished in the work of the kingdom of God.

#### **Read Ephesians 5:15-17**

The word “redeem” means “to rescue from loss.” In other words, we need to make every effort to avoid wasting time that can never be reclaimed. Time is valuable to God, and in His way of thinking, ALL time is holy.

#### **Read James 4:13-15**

We need to be careful not to set our schedules too rigidly. God may have other plans for us. The goal of life is not to do what we want to do, but to do what God wants us to do. Since our lives will soon vanish away like a vapor, we ought to commit our lives to the Lord. He is the Lord of our time.

#### **Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

God has provided us with ample time to accomplish everything He wants us to accomplish. The important thing is learning exactly what He wants us to accomplish and do that.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What are some ways that you waste or misuse your time on a regular basis?
2. How do you feel when you have something planned and then find that God has something else planned at the same time?
3. Do you have a “Sabbath concept” of time—that is, some of your time is for spiritual things and the rest is yours to do with as you please? Why does this kind of thinking hinder spiritual growth?
  - Self-denial is weakened and self-will is strengthened.
4. How can you get over this kind of thinking?
  - Admit your error and repent. Ask God to help you think properly.
5. Read Hebrew 4:9-11. What are we doing that is “our works” and not “God's works”?
  - Whatever is not of faith. Whatever is born of the flesh.

**The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment teaches us the value God places on time.**

## Theme: The Ten Commandments

### **Lesson 5. The Significance of Parents**

**To the teacher:** After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

**The 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment:** “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12).

The fifth commandment reveals the close spiritual connection between children and their parents. It also shows us how deeply that connection can affect a child’s future.

The word translated “honor” literally means “to make weighty.” Honoring a parent has nothing to do with feelings of affection. It simply means recognizing that, in God’s eyes, the parental position carries more weight than the children’s.

#### **Read Deuteronomy 21:18-21**

In Old Testament days, keeping good relations between parents and children was so serious a matter that God ordered any son who was stubborn and rebellious and would not obey his parents to be stoned to death.

#### **Read Proverbs 20:20**

Our responsibilities toward our parents are not nullified simply because they may not, in our opinion, be very good parents. The Bible does not command us to respect them in terms of holding them in high regard. Instead, we are commanded to behave in certain ways toward them that reflect their status as parents, sometimes in spite of our opinions and feelings about them.

In Jewish tradition, honor was demonstrated through acts of kindness and caring. Reverence meant to refrain from actions that diminished their role as parents or embarrassed them in public. For example, children were not to sit in their parents’ reserved seat or contradict their words.

#### **Read Colossians 3:20**

Paul taught the fifth commandment in the New Testament (though he left out the part about stoning). Why is this commandment so important? The answer lies in the fact that our relationship with our parents will greatly affect our relationship with the Lord. It has been said that God is not a substitute for a natural father, but rather a natural father is a child’s first

substitute for God. For this reason, the Bible contains many admonitions encouraging children to honor and obey their parents. When these precepts are broken, the young person places himself in spiritual jeopardy.

#### **Read Malachi 2:10; Galatians 4:26**

We all have natural parents, but we also have spiritual parents. Jesus is our spiritual Father and the Church is our spiritual mother. The fifth commandment tells us that we should give the same honor to Jesus and our church as we do our parents. By honoring our parents we learn to honor Jesus and our church. By honoring Jesus and our church, we become honorable human beings. In the same way, if we dishonor our parents we will tend to dishonor Jesus and our church and become dishonorable human beings.

The commandment to honor our parents promises longer life to those who obey it. Likewise, if we honor Jesus and our church, we will inherit the life that never ends.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Did your parents ever cause you to feel as though you just couldn’t win their approval? Tell about it.
2. Why do you think it is so easy to be hurt by your parents, even when they are essentially good parents?
  - We all have high expectations of our parents and expect them to love us. This makes us vulnerable to their shortcomings.
2. Tell about a time you clearly did not honor your parents.
4. Describe ways that your relationship with your father may be influencing the way you see God.
5. How can you overcome bad feelings toward your parents which may be hindering your relationship with Jesus?
  - Admit the truth about your feelings.
  - Confess your faults and failures to the group and ask for prayer (see James 5:16).
  - Begin doing acts of kindness for your parents. Treat them the way God wants you to, even if you still don’t have good feelings toward them. The feelings may come later, or they may never come. We don’t act because of our feelings, but because of our faith.

**The 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment teaches us the significance of our parents.**

## Theme: The Ten Commandments

### **Lesson 6. The Sanctity of Life**

**To the teacher:** After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

**The 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment:** “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13).

#### **Read Genesis 2:7**

Since human beings are given life directly from God, we should consider all human life to be sacred and valuable. The careless or unwarranted destruction of human life should be seen as a crime against the God who gave it. This is not to say that all killing is wrong in the eyes of God. There is a difference between killing and murder. The Hebrew word translated *murder* means “to wrongfully take someone’s life.” But killing can include self-defense, accidentally causing someone’s death, or killing one person to protect another. None of these acts are murder.

#### **Read Genesis 9:5-6**

To maliciously take the life of another is murder. It is, in a sense, stealing from God, for man was made in the image of God. And God has ordained that the penalty for such a crime is death. The reason He made the penalty so severe and so final is, first of all, because it is perfectly just—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life. It is also to deter people from murdering each other, since God considers each human being to be a potential candidate for eternal life.

#### **Read Deuteronomy 17:12**

Some people see a conflict between the prohibition against *murder* and *capital punishment*. There is no conflict, however. Murder was never God’s idea. Jesus is a God of life, not death. Murder came into the world because of the jealousy of a man named Cain. On the other hand, God instituted capital punishment as a way of purging the world of dangerous people. It is “immoral compassion” to feel sorry for a murderer who is being executed. We may feel sorry for his family or the family of his victim, but we must be careful not to feel sorry for the murderer.

#### **Read Leviticus 10:1-7**

To “tear your clothes” was a sign of great grief. But Aaron and his sons were told not to grieve the death of Nadab and Abihu. The reason they were not to grieve was because they were anointed. God expected them to see things as He sees them. Nadab and Abihu had knowingly disobeyed

God and defiled His tabernacle, so God had purged their rebellious spirit from the congregation. It would have been an accusation against God’s goodness if Aaron and his sons had grieved over these men as though they were the victim of some sadistic killer.

#### **Read Acts 5:1-11**

The story of Ananias and Sapphira is similar to that of Nadab and Abihu. It is vitally important that we realize that not all killing is wrong. It is only *murder* that the Bible prohibits. Since God is the giver of life, He has the prerogative to take away life whenever He wishes. But God never takes life maliciously. He only takes it for the protection of the rest of humanity.

#### **Read Matthew 5:20-24 and 1 John 3:14-15**

Jesus has made being angry at a brother without a cause and hating a brother equal to murder. He advises us that whenever we realize that we have done something that has hurt a brother and caused bad feelings, we should go to the brother and do all that we can to make things right. We need to do this not only for our sake, but also for the sake of the brother. If we are unwilling to do this and persist in holding a grudge, we are “abiding in death,” which is exactly the opposite of what it means to sanctify life.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever known someone who was murdered? Tell about it. How did you feel about the one who committed the murder? Have you ever known someone who committed murder? How did you feel about this person?
2. Why is hatred the spiritual equivalent of murder?
  - When you hate someone, you are detaching yourself from that person’s life. In that sense, you have murdered the person to yourself. Hatred is never justified for a Christian.
3. Have you ever hated a person so much that you seriously thought about killing him or her? What restrained you from actually doing it?
4. If all life comes from God, is there any situation where an abortion would be justified?
5. War is a difficult issue. Obviously war is always horrible, but are there any circumstances where killing in wartime can be justified? How would you describe those circumstances?
  - Is there a difference between a policeman defending innocent people by shooting someone who’s posing a direct threat and a fighter pilot dropping bombs on Iraqi soldiers?

**The 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment teaches us to respect of human life.**

## Theme: The Ten Commandments

### **Lesson 7. The Sanctity of Marriage**

**To the teacher:** After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

**The 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment:** “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14).

#### **Read Genesis 2:18-25 and Genesis 4:1**

God originated marriage and made sex a part of it. Of all the impulses and desires of man, sex is perhaps the most powerful and most difficult to manage. Since sex is “natural,” why should human beings have to control its expression? Of what benefit is it to a married couple?

The sexual union between a man and a woman is designed to bond them together emotionally, thereby strengthening their loving spiritual union. This is why sexual relations was intended by God to be kept within the bounds of marriage. Strong emotional attachments of this kind outside of marriage usually bring only pain and sorrow. The purpose of sexual intimacy is to build closeness and openness in a marriage and, of course, to produce children. Only within marriage can sexual relations be viewed as holy and pleasing to God.

#### **Read Hosea 2:19-20**

Throughout the Bible, God uses the idea of marriage to help us understand the relationship He desires to have with us. He wants us to enter into an eternal union with Him and get to know Him as our heavenly husband. Close relationships are impossible unless the two parties really know each other. Just as the goal of marriage is closeness and intimate knowledge of each other, so it is in our relationship with Jesus. The marital relationship is intended to be a portrait of this kind of close relationship.

#### **Read Leviticus 20:10**

Faithfulness to one’s marriage partner was considered so important in ancient Israel that anyone found to be unfaithful was to suffer the death penalty. From a spiritual standpoint, committing adultery is one of the quickest ways to experience spiritual death. It is a leading cause of divorce, and the Bible says that God hates divorce.

When the woman taken in adultery was brought to Jesus to be stoned, His willingness to forgive her should not be construed to mean that adultery was now permissible. It only meant that Jesus was willing to give the woman another chance. Keep in mind that His parting words to her were, “Go and sin no more.”

#### **Read Matthew 5:27-29**

Adultery never just happens. The phrase “he fell into adultery” is extremely misleading. No one just “falls” into adultery. For a person to be unfaithful to his or her marriage partner, several things are required:

1. Out-of-control sexual desire.
2. Lack of strong biblical morals.
3. Lack of commitment and love toward the marriage partner.
4. An opportunity.

Many times the only difference between the adulterer and the faithful spouse is opportunity. This is why Jesus tells us that if we are lusting after someone who is not our spouse, we are no different than the adulterer.

None of us can stop every lustful thought from entering our minds, but we do have the power to keep those thoughts from staying in our minds.

#### **Read Proverbs 6:32**

The word *adultery* comes from the word *adulterate*, which means to contaminate or make impure. God places a high value on faithfulness. When a person is unfaithful to his or her marriage partner or unfaithful to God, the person’s soul becomes contaminated and eventually dies. The Bible tells us that those who spend eternity with Jesus are “called, chosen, **and faithful**” (Revelation 17:14).

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What are some things that can stir up lustful thoughts that we should stay away from or divert our eyes from?
  - Movies, TV shows, billboards, people wearing revealing clothing, pornographic magazines and videos, Internet porn.
2. How should a woman feel about her husband if he regularly looks at pornographic pictures?
3. What should a Christian couple do that is having sexual problems in their marriage?
  - Don’t just ignore it, but seek pastoral guidance.
4. What should we do if we are being battled by lustful thoughts?
  - Be honest. Admit it to a safe person (perhaps your spouse).
  - Get away from anything that would stir up such thoughts.
  - Focus your mind on spiritual things (pray, read Bible, etc.)
  - Ask for prayer at care group or church.
5. Is anyone here tonight struggling with lustful thoughts and want prayer?

**The 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment teaches us the importance of faithfulness.**



## Theme: The Ten Commandments

### **Lesson 8. The Sanctity of Property**

**To the teacher:** After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

**The 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment:** “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15).

In a world of needs and wants and possessions and desires, many people have redefined stealing. They ask such questions as, “Is it stealing when it’s from a large company or the government? Is it stealing if they have so much they wouldn’t really notice?” For some people today, everything seems to be negotiable—even stealing.

While some may consider the command against stealing to be a burdensome enslavement; the truth is, accepting and embracing a commandment of God sets us free from the struggle with our more primitive drives toward selfishness. It eliminates the internal agonizing required to make something you know to be wrong appear to be right.

#### **Read Exodus 22:1-5**

Just as God gave each of us life, families, certain abilities and spiritual gifts, he also gave us certain property. Once we legitimately acquire a piece of property by gift, inheritance, earning, purchase, or trade, it becomes a part of us.

Just as God expects us to take good care of the material things He provides for us, He also expects us to respect the property of others. To take or damage a person’s property is to injure the person. God requires severe punishment for the crime of stealing. In general, you must pay back at least double what you took. If you steal \$20.00, you must pay back the twenty plus another twenty. In the Bible, the amount of restitution is not connected to the thief’s ability to pay, it is connected to the nature of his crime.

#### **Read Numbers 5:5-7**

If a thief turns himself in and admits his wrong-doing, he must pay only an addition 20%. In other words, he gets off easier if he freely acknowledges his guilt, perhaps because this is the first step toward genuine repentance.

#### **Read Ephesians 4:28**

The Bible contrasts stealing with working, perhaps because these are the two primary ways people acquire the things they need to exist. This verse tells us to work, not just so our needs can be met, but so we will have

the resources to help others in their time of need. It’s not enough to simply not steal from others; we must be willing to give to them.

#### **Read Proverbs 30:7-9**

The writer of Proverbs asked God to keep him from two conditions in life: extreme poverty and extreme prosperity. He was concerned that if he had too much money he might forget about the Lord, but if he didn’t have enough he might be tempted to steal, which would bring contempt on God’s name. Stealing not only harms other people, but it harms God as well.

#### **Read Jeremiah 23:29 and James 1:21**

This verse equates teaching false doctrine to stealing God’s Word from people. Since it is only the true Word of God that can save our souls, this is a serious matter with God. Stealing the Word is perhaps the worst kind of stealing there is. This is a good reason why we all need to learn the Bible well. The bottom line is this: If you haven’t bought it, earned it, been given it, or inherited it, it belongs to someone else and that’s where it should stay. To take or keep that which is not ours is stealing and violates the commandments of God.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Does “finders-keepers” justify keeping what is not yours?
  - Read Deuteronomy 22:1-2
2. If a bank accidentally credits an extra \$100.00 to your account, is it okay for you to keep it since it was their mistake?
3. If you buy something at a sale price and return it later after the sale, is it okay to accept a refund at the regular price?
4. Is there any circumstance where stealing can be justified?
  - What if a child was starving and a mother had no other way of obtaining food? Read Psalms 37:25
  - What if stealing a man’s gun would be the only thing that would prevent him from shooting his wife.
5. What should a Christian do who has stolen something in the past?
  - Make restitution if at all possible.
  - If it is not possible because the theft was so long ago or you don’t know where to find the person you stole from, consult with your pastor and seek God for an alternative way of making restitution.

Definition of RESTITUTION: restoration of something to its rightful owner; giving an equivalent for some injury.

**The 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment teaches us to respect the property of others.**

## Theme: The Ten Commandments

# Lesson 9. The Sanctity of Your Word

**To the teacher:** After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

**The 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment:** “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16).

According to an article in the New York Times, 91% of Americans confess that they regularly don't tell the truth. 20% admit that they can't get through the day without conscious, premeditated white lies. We live in an age when people are more accepting than ever of exaggerations, fabrications, and misrepresentations. Why is society so complacent about this sad situation? Perhaps because it lowers the standard against which people have to measure themselves. Many people reason, “If the president can lie, then so can I.”

### Read Romans 3:4; Titus 1:1-2

God does not, and cannot, lie. God is perfect, pure truth. He never represents Himself in any way different from the way He really is.

### Read Proverbs 6:16-19; Proverbs 12:22

Twice among the things that God hates he mentions lying. He calls it an abomination. This is because failing to tell the truth is completely contrary to the nature of God. Whenever we are anything less than completely honest, we are denying the truth of God with our lips.

### Read Proverbs 12:17-19; Proverbs 19:5

The word “witness” means one who testifies or repeats a matter. Jesus said that when we receive the Holy Spirit we receive power to be a witness for the Lord. But a “false witness” is one who does not testify truthfully. When a Spirit-filled believer speaks as a false witness, he is speaking against the Spirit that God placed within him. Certainly this grieves the Spirit of God within us.

### Read Psalms 15:1-5

Sometimes we say we will do something and find out afterward that it will require more from us than we originally bargained for. God holds in high regard those who make a vow (a promise) and keep their word, even if it hurts them to do so. This is a measure of true godly character. We must be as good as our word.

### Read Ephesians 4:21-25

Since the truth is in Jesus, we ought to be truthful with one another. In some ways lying is worse than stealing. The thief takes material things, while the liar creates injustice, distrust, and misery. In addition, the liar destroys himself spiritually by quenching the power of the Spirit of truth that God has placed within him.

### Read Psalms 15:1-2; Psalms 51:6

Not only should we be truthful and honest in our dealings with other people, but we must also be truthful and honest with ourselves. Inward deception always leads eventually to outward deception. We need to be completely honest before God, admitting our errors, our weaknesses, our shortcomings, and looking to the grace of God for our salvation.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How would you define the word “lie”? Is every untrue statement a lie?
  - A lie is only an untrue statement told for the purpose of deceiving or defrauding someone.
  - Every untrue statement is not a lie. Sometimes people make unintentional mistakes. A factual error is not necessarily a lie.
2. What do you think is the greatest reason people lie?
  - Because they fear the consequences of telling the truth.
  - Because they don't esteem the value of telling the truth.
  - Because they want to appear as something they are not.
3. Tell about a time when you promised someone something and later realized that it would cost you a whole lot more to keep your word than you had originally thought. What did you do?
4. The Bible tells us to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). How does love affect the way we speak the truth?
  - Sometimes truth can be very painful. Love helps us to be honest but in a kind and caring way.
5. Is there ever a situation where it would be appropriate to lie to someone?

**The 9th Commandment teaches us the sanctity of keeping our word.**

## Theme: The Ten Commandments

### **Lesson 10. The Sanctity of Desire**

**To the teacher:** After studying this outline and reading each of the Scriptures, summarize in one or two sentences what you have determined to be the main point that you hope to communicate to the group:

**The 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment:** “You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's” (Exodus 20:17).

Unlike the commandments against stealing, murdering, and lying, which are concrete acts, the final commandment deals with an attitude of the heart. Some people think they have no power over their deep inward desires, but the clearest evidence that we do have power over them is God's command that we exercise power over them.

We all came into the world empty and in need. Being in need is not wrong or selfish; it's just the way we are. God intended that we would recognize our neediness and look to Him for supply. The root meaning of the Greek word translated “Christ” is “one who furnishes what is needed.” Problems arise when our needs continually go unmet. Some people have never learned what it means to be content.

#### **Read Colossians 3:5 and 1 Timothy 6:6-10**

The Bible draws a sharp contrast between two words: “covetousness” and “contentment.” The first word means “to desire more.” It doesn't specify what a person must be desiring to be covetous. It simply means being discontent with whatever it is you have, regardless of whether you have a lot or a little. King David had several wives, yet he wasn't content. When He saw Bathsheba he immediately wanted her for himself. The covetous person never feels an inward sense of fulfillment. He always feels that he must be seeking and striving for more. In a way this is a deep failure to trust God to supply our needs.

#### **Read Proverbs 5:15-20**

The Bible tells us to be content with the wife or husband God has given us. We will not be content if we are always looking around and thinking how much better life would be if we were only with someone else. The word “contentment” literally means “self-satisfaction.” This does not mean only seeking to satisfy ourselves; it means being in a spiritual condition where our self is satisfied or filled up. It means having an inward confidence that our needs are being met or will be met.

#### **Read Ecclesiastes 5:10-16**

It is not wrong to want something. But it is clearly wrong to obsess over material things or to want something at someone else's expense. The bottom line is, there is no eternal profit in gaining the things of the present world if we end up losing our souls. Instead, the Bible tells us that if we are content with what we have and live our lives devoted to Jesus, this is “great gain.” Inward peace, joy, and contentment are the true riches of life.

#### **Read Ecclesiastes 6:7**

Acquiring material things will never bring contentment to the soul. They only tend to cause us to want even more. Only Jesus Christ can satisfy the emptiness of man. He tells us that if we will come to Him, He will give us rest, He will satisfy our needs.

#### **Read Psalms 27:4**

We always end up seeking after the things we desire. And ultimately what we seek after is what we will get. God holds each of us responsible for choosing what we will desire. The choice is between Jesus and the eternal life that only He can give, or the material things of the present life, which cannot give eternal life and therefore end with death.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Can you think of a wealthy person you know who is extremely unhappy?
2. Can you think of any extremely poor people you know who are happy?
3. Why does covetousness tend to bring forth evil? (Read James 4:1-4)
4. What are some specific things we can do to keep ourselves from being covetous people?
  - Control our thought-life by keeping our minds focused on spiritual things (read Romans 8:5-6)
  - Keep ourselves active in spiritual activities (read 1 Corinthians 15:58 and Hebrews 10:24-25).
  - Don't walk around stores just for the fun of it. Shop for what you need and then leave.
  - Don't continually feast your eyes on pictures of things you don't have and really can't afford (TV, magazines, catalogs, etc.).
  - Develop a strong value for spiritual things over material things (read Matthew 6:19-21).
5. Are there any covetous attitudes in your heart that you want to break free from by confessing them to the group tonight?

**The 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment teaches us the importance of controlling our desires.**