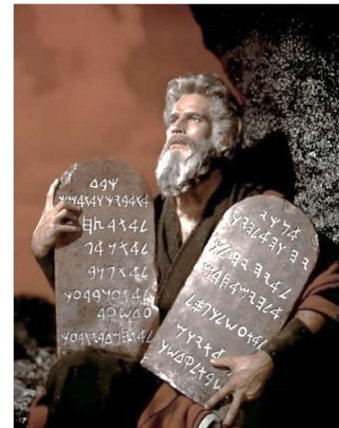


THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Who can forget Charlton Heston (Moses) coming down Mount Sinai with the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God?

It is an epic scene from an epic movie.

But the real scene must have been so much more powerful, amazing, and absolutely terrifying! Yahweh—the self-existent, eternal, holy, sovereign, transcendent, omnipotent Creator God—spoke verbally to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. He revealed His “Ten Words” with thunder and all-consuming fire...and the people trembled. Hollywood, with all its special effects, still can’t hold a candle to this scene.



But what are we to do with the Ten Commandments today?

Are they still relevant? Are we still to obey them? Do they still speak with divine authority?

This is not a side issue. Even in our own culture, there are debates over whether to post the Ten Commandments in our courtrooms and classrooms. And it goes beyond posting them on a wall. The deeper debate is over whether they should form the foundation of all our laws and conduct, especially when it comes to the very first command—*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.*

As Christians, our initial response is to say: “Of course, the Ten Commandments still apply! They are God’s Word! They are His commandments, not His suggestions! In fact, the reason our culture is in such a mess is because we have abandoned the Ten Commandments!”

However, theologically, it is not so cut and dry. For instance, the Ten Commandments also say—*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.* And it is pretty clear from the Old Testament that Saturday is the intended Sabbath day, not Sunday. So what are we to do with that?

And the Ten Commandments do not sit alone. They are part of the “law of Moses,” the *Torah*, the Mosaic Covenant, which includes 613 commandments according to the rabbinic scribes.

Are we to obey all 613 commandments? Are we to avoid eating shellfish? Is bacon off the menu? Are we still to offer sacrifices? Are we to avoid wearing clothes made of two different fabrics? And if we say—“Of course not!” Then, why not?

Throughout church history, theologians have debated exactly how the “law of Moses” (including the Ten Commandments) applies to New Testament believers. And the debate still goes on today.

The traditional view sees three aspects to the law of Moses—moral, ceremonial, and civil. Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial law in His death so no sacrifices are needed today. Israel is no longer a nation governed by God so the civil law is also non-applicable. Thus, the only aspect of the law of Moses still applicable today is the moral law (e.g., the Ten Commandments).



This view is very helpful but it is often hard to define or defend since the Bible does not neatly divide up the law of Moses into these three categories. And we still have the same question with the Sabbath. Is it ceremonial, civil, or moral?

A better approach is to see the “law of Moses” as part of the **Mosaic Covenant**—a covenant made by God with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. This covenant was a conditional covenant. *If* Israel obeyed, then they would experience the blessings of the covenant in the land of promise.

But Israel failed...immediately...repeatedly...miserably.

The whole Old Testament tells the story of Israel’s failure to keep God’s covenant.

And it is our failure too.

If Israel—the nation who saw His glory, experienced His miracles, and received His promises—failed, then we can be sure that all of us would have failed too.

All of us stand guilty before a holy and righteous God.

But, praise God, what we could not do, Jesus Christ did for us! He obeyed *all* of God’s commands perfectly and He fulfilled the Mosaic Covenant completely.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (Matthew 5:17)

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:4)

GOD reveals the law—declaring His divine holiness.

ISRAEL fails to obey the law—exposing humanity’s sinfulness.

JESUS CHRIST fulfills the law—demonstrating His perfect completeness.

BELIEVERS trust Jesus Christ, the fulfiller of the law—receiving His imputed righteousness.

THE SPIRIT writes the law on our hearts—empowering us toward increasing Christlikeness.

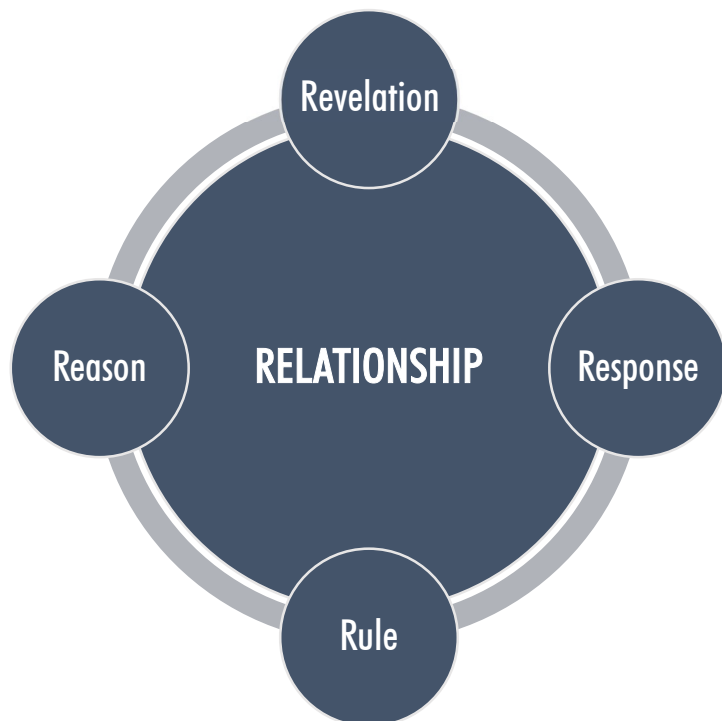
Thus, as believers in Jesus Christ, we are not under the law of Moses. Instead, we are under the law of Christ. And we are not grafted into the Mosaic Covenant but into the New Covenant—the covenant that Jesus Christ inaugurated, by His blood, when He died on the cross for our sins.

So back to the question...how are we to view the Ten Commandments today?

The Law still has value to us, not as a taskmaster, condemning us and beating us into submission, but as a servant, revealing to us God’s holy, righteous character, providing us with abiding moral principles, reminding us of our need for Jesus Christ, and pointing us to the priority of love.

Here is a helpful paradigm.

Behind every **Rule**, there is a **Reason**. God did not give arbitrary laws. His OT laws were for His glory and our good. In knowing the reason for a law of God, we see a **Revelation** of God’s righteous character and gracious heart. This revelation of His character leads us to a **Response** as believers in Jesus Christ—the One who perfectly embodies God’s character and fulfills His law. This is all done within the context of **Relationship**. Thus, we are now called to follow Christ, not the letter of the law. In following Christ, we fulfill the spirit of the law, which is the law of love. Loving God and loving others is the ultimate fulfillment of the law.



One of them, an expert in the law, tested Him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:35-40)

AUTHOR: Moses (1526-1406 BC)

PURPOSE: Moses wrote Exodus to detail God’s historical deliverance of His people from Egypt and to describe their formation as the “people of God.” The nation of Israel is called both *out of* bondage in Egypt and *into* a covenant relationship with God. They are redeemed for a purpose.

OUTLINE: Exodus is generally divided into two main sections.

- I. **ISRAEL’S DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT (1:1-18:27)**
- II. **ISRAEL’S COVENANT WITH GOD (19:1-40:38)**

There is a chiastic structure to Exodus which points to the centrality of the Mosaic Covenant.

- A. **Slavery: Building for Pharaoh (1-5)**
- B. Redemption: The Lamb of God (6-12)
- C. The Wilderness: God with Israel (13-18)
- D. The Covenant: The Law of God (19-24)**
- C. The Tabernacle: God with Israel (25-31)
- B. Rebellion: The Golden Calf (32-34)
- A. **Worship: Building for God (35-40)**

The Ten Commandments also have a chiastic structure to them.

- A. **Relationship to God—Heart (20:1-6)**
- B. Relationship To God—Words (20:7)
- C. Relationship to God—Deeds (20:8-11)
- D. Relationship to Family—Heart, Words, Deeds (20:12)**
- C. Relationship to Others—Deeds (20:13-15)
- B. Relationship to Others—Words (20:16)
- A. **Relationship to Others—Heart (20:17)**

The following study guide takes you through a weekly five-day exploration of the Book of Exodus.

Day 1: **OBSERVATION.** Reading the passage and observing what it says.

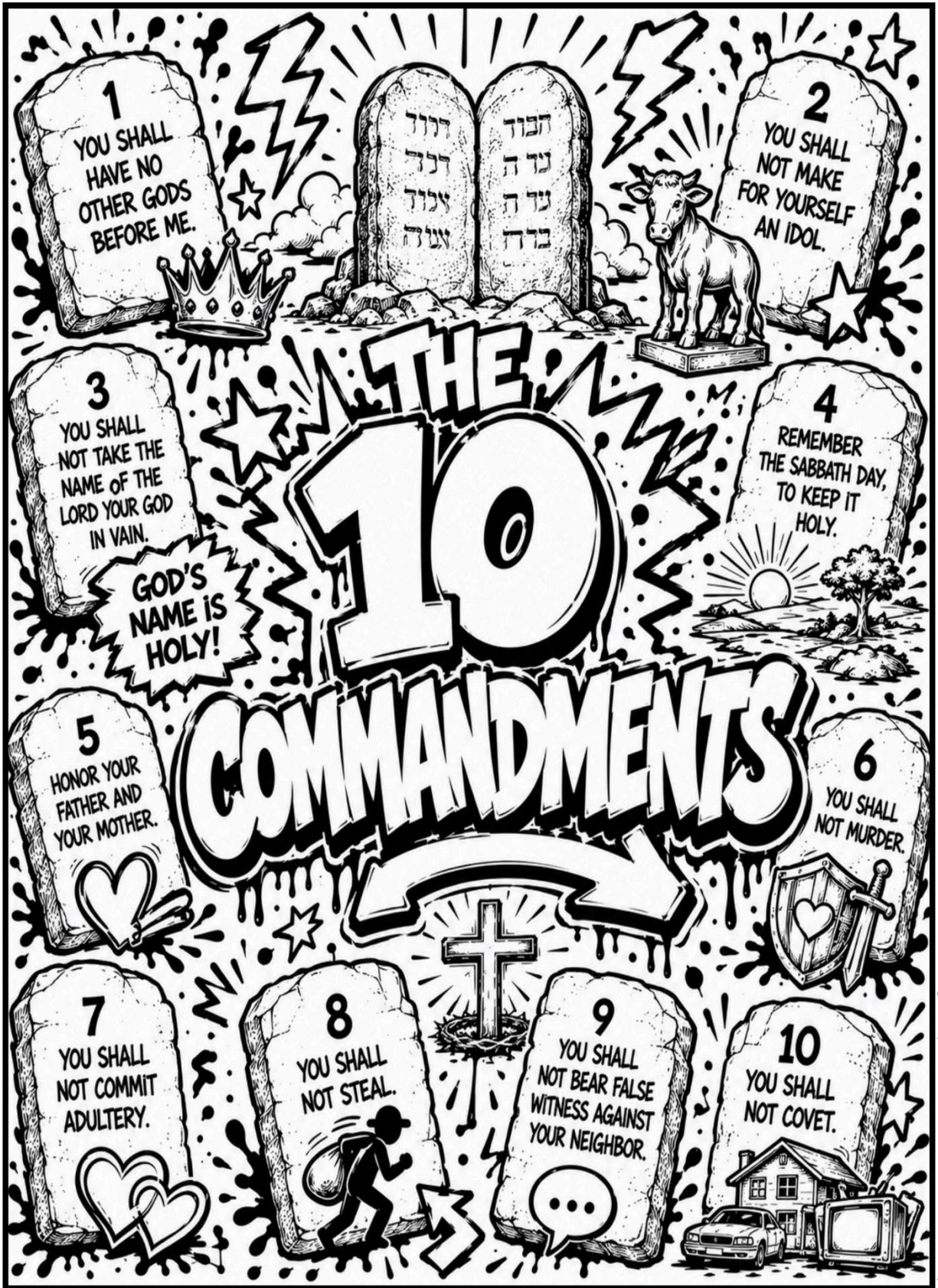
Day 2: **MEDITATION.** Reading key verse(s) over and over and memorizing them.

Day 3: **INTERPRETATION.** Doing a word study and/or exploring parallel passages.

Day 4: **DEVOTION.** Reading an excerpt from a classic commentary on Exodus.

Day 5: **APPLICATION.** Seeking to live out God’s Word in your daily life.

We encourage you to do this study individually *and* corporately. Spending time alone in God’s Word is a daily discipline that grows us in the faith. However, our spiritual growth is also connected to and lived out in community. Sharing what you are learning with others, praising God together, and loving and praying for one another are essential to our growth and to our joy.



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You shall have no other gods before me

Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve" - Matthew 4:10



You shall not worship idols

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you...which is idolatry - Colossians 3:5



You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain

You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all - Matthew 5:33b-34a



THE Comman

"Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy

There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his - Hebrews 4:9-10



Honor your father and mother

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord - Colossians 3:20





TEN Commandments

I have not
come to
abolish them
but to fulfill
them.”

Matthew 5:17



You shall not covet

Sexual immorality and all impurity or
covetousness must not even be named among
you, as is proper among saints - Ephesians 5:3



You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Having put away falsehood, let
each one of you speak the truth
with his neighbor, for we are
members one of another -
Ephesians 4:25



You shall not steal

Let the thief no longer
steal, but rather let him
labor, doing honest
work with his own
hands, so that he may
have something to
share with anyone in
need - Ephesians 4:28



You shall not commit adultery

Let marriage be held in honor
among all, and let the marriage
bed be undefiled, for God will
judge the sexually immoral and
adulterous - Hebrews 13:4

You shall not murder.

Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer,
and no murderer has eternal life - 1 John 3:15

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WORSHIPING GOD ALONE

Exodus 20:1-6

DAY ONE

OBSERVATION

Israel has arrived at Mount Sinai. They are a redeemed people called to be a holy nation. God reveals the Ten Commandments to govern their relationship with Him and with others. It begins with worshiping Him alone.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 20:1-6. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down the main message or your thoughts next to each paragraph.

And God spoke all these words, saying:

² “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³ “You shall have no other gods before Me.

⁴ “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—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; ⁵ 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 upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” (NKJV)

What thought or verse stands out to you in Exodus 20:1-6? Why?

How does God describe Himself? (20:2) _____

What is God’s first commandment? (20:3) _____

What is God’s second commandment? (20:4-5a) _____

What reason does God give for this commandment? (20:5b-6) _____

The Ten Commandments are repeated again in Deuteronomy 5. The very next chapter (Deut. 6) emphasizes the priority of the first commandment of God. **Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9.**

“Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, ² that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. ³ Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’”

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶ And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

What reasons does God give for obeying His commands? (6:1-3)

What is Israel to hear? (6:4) _____

What is the primary command that they are to obey? (6:5) _____

Where should they store God’s commands? (6:6) _____

What should they do with God’s commands? (6:7-9) _____

The real purpose of Deuteronomy 6:8-9 does not seem to be on simply strapping God’s laws on your wrist and forehead and writing them all over your house. God wants more than this.

What kind of life do you think God is calling His people to in Deuteronomy 6:6-9?

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Deuteronomy 6:5-8 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*Love the Lord your God
with all your heart
and with all your soul
and with all your strength.
These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.
Impress them on your children.
Talk about them
when you sit at home and when you walk along the road,
when you lie down and when you get up.
Tie them as symbols on your hands
and bind them on your foreheads. (NIV)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 20" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 20:5 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the phrase "jealous" and click on the Strong's number (H7067) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the OT.

What is the Hebrew word for "jealous"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially Gesenius' Lexicon.) _____

Click on the Root Word (Etymology) to bring up the verb form of this word (Strong's #7065).

What is the Hebrew root word for "jealous"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially Strong's Definitions and (3) in Gesenius' Lexicon.)

This same word can be used in both a positive and negative sense. **Read the following passages which use the same Hebrew or Greek word often translated "jealousy."**

*When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became **jealous** of her sister. So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!" (Genesis 30:1)*

*"Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned My anger away from the Israelites. Since he was as **zealous** for My honor among them as I am, I did not put an end to them in My **zeal**." (Numbers 25:11)*

*And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very **zealous** for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." (1 Kings 19:9b-10)*

*Let not your heart **envy** sinners but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day. (Proverbs 23:17)*

*Do not fret because of evildoers.
Do not be **jealous** of the wicked. (Proverbs 24:19)*

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not **envy**, it does not boast, it is not proud. (1 Corinthians 13:4)*

*Pursue love, and **earnestly desire** the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. (1 Cor. 14:1)*

*I am **jealous** for you with a godly **jealousy**. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Him. (2 Corinthians 11:2)*

*As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be **zealous** and repent. (Revelation 3:19)*

What do you think is the difference between “godly jealousy” and sinful jealousy, between being zealous in a good way and being jealous in a bad way?

One of the other interpretive questions in Exodus 20:1-6 is how to understand God’s “visiting of the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations” (20:5).

Read the following excerpt from gotquestions.org. Mark key thoughts and phrases as you read.

Children are not punished for the sins committed by their parents; neither are parents punished for the sins of their children. Each of us is responsible for our own sins. Ezekiel 18:20 tells us, “The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son.” This verse clearly shows that punishment for one’s sins is borne by that person.

There are verses that lead some to believe in intergenerational punishment for sin, or a generational curse. One of these verses is Exodus 20:5, “You shall not bow down to [idols] or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.”

Keeping Exodus 20:5 in context, we notice right away that God is referring to the sin of idolatry. God considered idolatry to be an extremely treacherous betrayal of a sacred trust. Idolaters were traitors to God’s rule. Besides the abhorrent practices which accompanied idol worship, idolatry had a way of ingraining itself in a culture. Children raised in such an environment would keep the tradition going and practice similar idolatry, thus falling into the established pattern of disobedience. The effect of one disobedient generation was that wickedness would take root so deeply that it took several generations to reverse.

The implication of Exodus 20:5 is that children are akin to their parents. A new generation will tend to repeat the sins of their forebears. Therefore, God “punishing the children” is simply another way of saying that the children are repeating the fathers’ sins. The tendency to repeat the mistakes of history is especially strong in an idolatrous culture.

Even though one generation’s sin and idolatry can impact the generations that follow, God makes it clear in the very next verse that His mercy extends to thousands of generations.

Where sin abounds, grace abounds even more (Romans 5:20)! Praise God!

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **G. Campbell Morgan's** book on *The Ten Commandments*. Morgan (1863-1945) was a highly influential British pastor, theologian, and author known for his commitment to expository preaching (verse-by-verse from the Bible) and his dynamic, engaging preaching style.

Thou shalt have none other gods before Me.

Of the ten words of Sinai the first four deal with man's relation to God. Of these the first brings us face to face with the object of worship: *Thou shalt have none other gods before Me*. The second reveals the true mode of worship: *Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor the likeness of any form that is in heaven above*. The order of worship is to be spiritual, not material...

I. The First Commandment

If God is who he claims to be—I AM—then He must be the supreme object of worship. If it be true that He is Jehovah—then the commandment is a reasonable one, and it must be a very unreasonable thing to have any other God beside Him. In the very necessity of the case, if the word spoken by God be true, then God is sufficient, and God is God. There cannot be two who fulfill that description of limitless life. Point to another god, and he must be limited... Therefore it is based upon the necessity of the case—upon the most absolute reasonableness—that God first declares Himself and His glory, and then utters the first great word, *Thou shalt have none other gods before Me*.

Every man needs a god. There is no man who has not, somewhere in his heart, in his life, in the essentials of his being, a shrine in which is a deity whom he worships. It is as impossible for a man to live without having an object of worship as it is for a bird to fly if it is taken out of the air. The very composition of human life, the mystery of man's being, demands a center of worship as a necessity of existence. All life is worship. There may be a false god at the center of the life; but every

activity of being, all the energy of life, the devotion of powers—these things are all worship. The question is whether the life and powers of man are devoted to the worship of the true God or to that of a false one.

There is a center, a motive, a reason, a shrine, a deity somewhere—something which man worships. It has been said that when man dethrones God, he deifies and worships himself. There are men today of whom it may be said that they worship themselves with all their heart and with all their strength and with all their mind, and themselves only do they serve. In every case, man demands a god, a king, a lawgiver—one who arranges the program, utters the commandments, and demands obedience.

II. The Genesis of Idolatry

This incontrovertible fact reveals the genesis of idolatry. The moment a man gets out of touch with God and loses the vision of Him Who says, "I am Jehovah Elohim, the Lord thy God," he puts something else in the place of God. Think of the gods of the heathen, as mentioned in the Bible—Moloch, Baal, and Mammon! The worship of Moloch was the descent of man into the realm of awful cruelty, that of Baal took men through the depths of sexual immorality, and that of Mammon debased its devotees to the lust which dreams that power lurks in possession. Moloch, Baal and Mammon were the gods of the heathen; and these are they that men are worshipping until this hour. Although these gods go by other names in this cultured and enlightened twentieth century, yet the world is crowded with idolaters who worship them. One need not go to Africa, China, or India for specimens — they may be found at home.

III. The New Testament Enforcement

A New Testament picture of idolatry is seen in Philippians 3:18-19, *For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is their belly.* That is the kind of thing that is too often passed over. How many there are who have just that one god of their appetites! What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we satisfy the cravings of the flesh? These are their gods. A man of this sort does not burn incense to an idol; but he has gone down very low, when the things for which he lives and strives, and to which all the glorious possibilities of his manhood are consecrated, consist of eating, drinking, and other forms of merely sensual gratification...

Upon all these commandments the New Testament throws a flood of light, and so far from abrogating them, it emphasizes, reiterates and invests them with new force... God has not set aside law, but He has found a way by which man can fulfill law, and so be free from it. Has God, in this Christian era, given up His claim to worship, and said that men may have another god? Far from it. Consider the words of Jesus, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind* (Matt. 22:37); and again, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve* (Matt. 4:10)...

Let men take five minutes to shut out everything save the great fact that they stand alone with God. Some are terribly afraid to spend that much time with their own thoughts. If they will, if they dare, let them ask, as they stand in the light of that first commandment, *What is my god? To what is my life devoted?* If the answer indicates anything that puts God into the background, then in the name of heaven and of their own safety, let them break down every idol, cast out every foe, and let the God Who is...be their God.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven 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.

The second commandment is by no means a repetition of the first. It forbids a practice which becomes possible only when the One God is believed in and worshipped.

The first forbids us to have any other gods besides the One Who makes Himself known by the name, Jehovah Elohim... The second, taking it for granted that there is no god but the one true God, forbids the creation of anything which is supposed to be a representation of Him, to assist man in worship.

I. The Second Commandment

First, let us consider the commandment. Some there are who think that the Puritan fathers imagined that what was forbidden was the making of the likeness of anything in the heavens above or the earth beneath, and so they came to look upon every form of art as idolatrous. I have known Christian folk who, because of this commandment, would not have their photographs taken, and who refused to have a picture in their houses!

This, however, could not have been the Divine intention; for, immediately after the giving of this commandment, among the pattern of things pertaining to the Tabernacle, in the very holiest of all, two images of the cherubim overshadowed the mercy-seat. On the borders of the garment of the High Priest, also, as he went into the Holy Place to minister, there were bells and pomegranates. Man was not forbidden to make a representation of anything: he is forbidden to use the representation as an aid to worship...Man is not to make to himself *a graven image*... *Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them.* In the closing words lies the force of the commandment. It strikes at a desire that is very deep-seated in the human heart...

II. Why Man Makes Images

In order to a careful examination of the reason of this commandment let it be considered why man makes an image or a picture to help him in his worship. The answer may be briefly stated—the spiritual sense in man is dead. No man who knows God, no man who is living in daily communion with Him, needs a picture to help him to pray. None who know what it is to live and walk with God would derive help from an image placed in front of them when they worship. By the new birth of the Spirit, they have had the spiritual consciousness restored; so that they know God, and are able to commune directly with Him.

If a man crave help, it is thereby proven that he lacks the spiritual consciousness. This very lack renders him incapable of creating anything which gives a proper representation of God. Every attempt which man has made to represent God in any way has resulted in a false picture of Him...

Look at the matter from another point of view. In the instant that man sets up a representation of any description to help him to realize God, he denies that which is essential in God. Suppose that it is an image, a picture, or some system of worship, concerning which he says, "This is intended as an aid to my worship of the one God." See what he has done! The image, the picture, or the system of worship is limited. The essential fact of God is that He is limitless, that He is eternal, that He is self-existent, there being no end to His being, and no limit to His power. Limitlessness lies at the heart and center of the thought of God, and the moment a man makes an image, he denies the essence of God. For that reason, God forbade that there should be the making of any images; for, not only is the image false, it is misleading... *As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.* The thought of God produced by a false representation of God will produce character that is false.

There is another Scripture which says, concerning idols: *Noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat* [Ps. 115:6-7]. Then follows the philosophy of idol-worship: *They that make them are like unto them.*

Every man is like his god. Man becomes like the thing that he puts in the place of God. If man gets a false notion of God, through his idol or image, he becomes as false as his god.

III. Present-Day Application

Are the men of today in danger of breaking this command? Most certainly they are. Consider a few of the ways in which the second commandment is broken. The revival of priestism; the prevalent passion for ritual; the elevation of the ordinances of the Christian religion into undue place and prominence; the professed worship of nature; the worship of humanity... these are instances. In all these things, men tell us that they worship God; but they are trying to worship Him through some supposed expression of Him which they have made for themselves...

For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments

There are persons who read this and declare that if a man be impure, God will punish his child on that account. Not so. What is the simple, plain meaning of these concluding words? If a man put something in the place of his Creator, that iniquity of making a representation of God is visited upon the children of the third and fourth generation... That is to say, if, in worship, men put something in the place of God, if they come under the influence of worship which is an attempt to put something between God and man, then they are not only harming themselves but their

children. The probability is that their idea of worship will be transmitted to their children, and their children's idea of worship will be transmitted to their children, so that the wrong that men do themselves when they misrepresent God is a wrong which they are doing to their children likewise. That is the first and simple meaning of the words used in connection with this commandment.

It is a solemn thing thus to pass on to children a wrong conception of God; it is the most awful thing a man can do. Men often talk about passing to their children evil habits. Nothing can minimize the awfulness of such conduct; but here is the root of it all. When a man puts something, as the object of his worship, in the place of God, he passes on the same practice to his offspring. What a terrible heritage he is thus handing down to the child!

But notice the gracious promise: *Showing mercy unto thousands*. There is very little doubt that the rendering ought to be: *Showing mercy unto a thousand generations...* That is to say, that if a man sweeps the idols away, and gets into living connection with God, worshipping Him without anything between, the result will be that his child's child will, most likely, so worship. Here is a remarkable comparison: God visits the iniquity to the third and fourth generation; but He shows mercy unto the thousandth generation! ...

Thus, it is still a question of supreme importance how a person is worshipping God. If he is doing so through a priest, or through ritual, or through some creation of his own, he is robbing himself of the essential blessing that comes from true worship.

God calls men into His own presence... They worship, not when they listen to preaching, not when they are attentive to the form and fashion of music, not when they are thinking of the emblems spread on a table; but when they pass through the preaching...beyond the emblems...and are face to face with God. Whenever a man stops short of that face-to-face worship of the Eternal God, he is working ruin to his own character, because he is breaking the commandment of God.

Thank God, today, no man need stop short. The veil has been rent, the priest has been swept away, ritual has been put out of sight, and there is a direct pathway open from the place where man is into the very presence-chamber of the Eternal God. Without priest, prophet or preacher, man can go right into the presence of God and worship Him. And because He has opened the new and living way, every attempt to put something between the soul and God is of the essence of idolatry, against which His face was set in the days of His ancient people Israel, and against which His face is as surely set today.

What thought from G. Campbell Morgan's words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Go back and re-read Exodus 20:1-6. Take time to look over and reflect on the things that you learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write down one truth that impacted you from your study this week.

God’s greatest commandment—and the foundation of them all—is to love Him with all one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength. He must be my first priority. I must worship Him alone. I cannot have any other gods or idols above Him. If I do, then everything else in my life will be off kilter. As Jesus said:

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24)



Mammon is more than just money or material possessions. It is an ancient Semitic word that referred to one’s “treasure,” what one tended to put their confidence, trust, and reliance upon. For many people, this is money or material possessions but it can also be such things as my gifts, abilities, intelligence, degrees, competence, titles, fame, success, sex, sports, pleasure, power, relationships, family, physical health, beauty, strength, approval, acceptance, accolades, and attention.

All of these things can compete for my worship, love, and devotion to God. That doesn’t mean that they are bad in themselves. The problem is when something “good” becomes a “god” to me. When I rely upon it for my identity, joy, and security, then I have crossed the line into idolatry.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if there is any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)*

What do you tend to worry about? What do you fear losing? Why?

What do you tend to get angry about? What do you want to control? Why?

What things do you tend to rely upon for your security and significance?

What do you tend to spend your money on? _____

What occupies your mind first thing in the morning? _____

What do you tend to give your attention to the most throughout the day?

What is one thing that, if you lost it or it was taken away, you would struggle to go on with life?

Based on your answers, what are some of the things (even the good things) that could easily become an idol of your heart? What could you rely upon for your security and significance?

Ultimately there is nothing in this world that can give us true security and significance. Everything in this world is passing away. You and I are passing away. When we give our devotion to these temporal things, then at some point they will most certainly fail us.

What do you need to put on the altar before God? What do you need to surrender to Him?

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

The single most important activity of your life is to worship God. You were made for this – to offer your whole life, in all its parts, as a hymn of praise to the Lord.

Sinclair Ferguson

If we haven't learned to be worshipers, it doesn't really matter how well we do anything else.

Erwin Lutzer

We're here to be worshippers first and workers second. We take a convert and immediately make a worker out of him. God never meant it to be so. God meant that a convert should learn to be a worshiper, and after that he can learn to be a worker.

A. W. Tozer

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- People generally don't worship physical idols today. But what do we tend to worship? What are some of the idols in our culture today? Make a list together as a group of the things that people worship in our culture and then determine what you think are the "top five." Which of these "top five" do you struggle not to make an idol in your life?
- What word, verse, or thought stood out to you from your study this week? Why?
- Why do you think worshipping God first and foremost is the most important commandment? Practically what happens if we put something else first in our lives?
- What would it look like to worship God "with all your heart"? To worship Him "with all your soul"? To worship Him "with all your mind"? To worship Him "with all your strength"?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Alexander MacLaren? If so, what?
- Share what you learned from the Application section of the study this week (or complete it now). What do you need to put on the altar before the Lord and surrender to Him?

REVERENCING GOD'S NAME

Exodus 20:7

DAY ONE

OBSERVATION

The first two commandments govern our heart—we must worship God with *all* our heart, soul, and strength and have no other gods before Him. The third commandment governs our speech.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 20:7 and parallel passages. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

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)

.....

And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:12)

Then you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: “Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. And whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death.” (Leviticus 24:15-16)

Praise the Lord!

Praise, O servants of the Lord,

Praise the name of the Lord!

Blessed be the name of the Lord

From this time forth and forevermore!

From the rising of the sun to its going down

The Lord's name is to be praised. (Psalm 113:1-3)

Let them praise the name of the Lord,

For His name alone is exalted;

His glory is above the earth and heaven. (Psalm 148:13)

Two things I request of You

(Deprive me not before I die):

Remove falsehood and lies far from me;

Give me neither poverty nor riches—

Feed me with the food allotted to me;

Lest I be full and deny You,

And say, “Who is the Lord?”

Or lest I be poor and steal,

And profane the name of my God. (Proverbs 30:7-9)

You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written. (Romans 2:23-24)

What thought or verse stands out to you among these verses? Why?

Using highlighters or colored pencils, highlight or mark the following phrases in these verses:

- Mark “the name of the Lord” (or similar phrases, e.g., “His name”) in yellow.
- Mark negative uses of the Lord’s name (e.g., vain, profane, blaspheme, curse) in red.
- Mark positive uses of the Lord’s name (e.g., exalt, praise, bless) in green.

Write out the third commandment (Exodus 20:7).

How should we speak about “the name of the Lord”? Why?

How should we not speak about “the name of the Lord”? Why?

What was the penalty in the OT for blaspheming the name of the Lord?

Why do you think the penalty was so severe? Why is reverencing God’s name so important?

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Psalm 113:1-5 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*Hallelujah!
Give praise, servants of the Lord;
Praise the name of the Lord.
Let the name of the Lord be blessed
Both now and forever.
From the rising of the sun to its setting,
Let the name of the Lord be praised.
The Lord is exalted above all the nations,
His glory above the heavens.
Who is like the Lord our God—
The one enthroned on high. (CSB)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 20" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 20:7 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word "name" and click on the Strong's number (H8034) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for "name"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

Read the following passages which highlight the importance of a person's "name."

*Your **name** will no longer be Abram; your **name** will be Abraham, for I will make you the father of many nations. (Genesis 17:5)*

And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks."

But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

*So He said to him, "What is your **name**?"*

He said, "Jacob."

*And He said, "Your **name** shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." (Genesis 32:26-28)*

*The Lord came down in a cloud, stood with him there, and proclaimed his **name**, "the Lord." The Lord passed in front of him and proclaimed: "The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation." (Exodus 34:5-7).*

*A good **name** is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. (Proverbs 22:1)*

*A good **name** is better than fine perfume. (Ecclesiastes 7:1a)*

*Jesus is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other **name** under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:11-12)*

*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the **name** which is above every **name**, that at the **name** of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)*

What do you learn about the importance of a person’s “name” from these passages?

Next go to Exodus 20:7 on blueletterbible.org. Find the word “vain” and click on the Strong’s number (H7723) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the OT.

What is the Hebrew word for “vain”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

Read the following passages which use this Hebrew word. Mark key phrases as you read.

*I am allotted months of **emptiness**, and nights of misery are apportioned to me. (Job 7:3)*

*They speak **worthlessness** to one another;
With a flattering lip and with a double heart they speak. (Psalm 12:2)*

*O give us help against the adversary,
For deliverance by man is in **vain**. (Psalm 60:11)*

*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in **vain**.
Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in **vain**. (Psalm 127:1)*

*Do not bring any more **meaningless** offerings; I consider your incense detestable! You observe new moon festivals, Sabbaths, and convocations, but I cannot tolerate sin-stained celebrations! (Isaiah 1:13)*

*No one makes claims justly; no one pleads honestly. They trust in **empty and worthless** words; they conceive trouble and give birth to iniquity. (Isaiah 59:4)*

Based on these verses, what do you think it means to speak the Lord’s name “in vain”?

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Thomas Watson's** book on *The Lord's Prayer*. Watson (1620-86) was an English Puritan pastor and writer. His works reflect his uncompromising devotion to Christ (for which he was imprisoned) and are known for their simplicity, richness, and faithfulness to God's Word.

Hallowed be your name. Matthew 6:9

I come now to the Lord's prayer, which consists of seven petitions.

The first petition is: *Hallowed be your name*. In the Latin it is, *Sanctified be your name*. In this petition, we pray that God's name may shine forth gloriously, and that it may be honored and sanctified by us, in the whole course and tenor of our lives. It was the angels' song, *Glory be to God in the highest*, that is, let his name be glorified and hallowed. This petition is set in the forefront, to show that the hallowing of God's name is to be preferred before all things. We pray, *Hallowed be your name*, before we pray, *Give us this day our daily bread*... As Christ said of love in Matt. 22:38, "This is the first and great commandment;" so I may say of this petition, *Hallowed be your name*: it is the first and great petition; it contains the most weighty thing in true religion—God's glory.

When some of the other petitions shall be useless and out of date, as we shall not need to pray in heaven, "Give us our daily bread," because there shall be no hunger; nor "Forgive us our trespasses," because there shall be no sin; nor "Lead us not into temptation," because the old serpent is not there to tempt: yet the hallowing of God's name will be of great use and request in heaven; we shall be ever singing hallelujahs, which is nothing else but the hallowing of God's name.

Every Person in the blessed Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, must have this honor, to be hallowed; their glory being equal, and their majesty co-eternal. To admire God's name is not enough; we may admire a conqueror; but when we say, "Hallowed be your name," we set God's name above every name, and not only admire him—but adore him. This

is proper to the Deity only. For further explanation, I shall propound three questions.

I. What is meant by God's name?

1. **His essence.** "The name of the God of Jacob defend you" (Psalm 20:1); that is, the God of Jacob defend you.

2. **Anything by which he may be known.** As a man is known by his name; so by his attributes of wisdom, power, holiness, and goodness, God is known as by his name.

II. What is meant by hallowing God's name?

To **hallow**, is to set apart a thing from the common use, to some sacred end. As the vessels of the sanctuary were said to be hallowed, so, to hallow God's name, is to set it apart from all abuses, and to use it holily and reverently. In particular, hallowing God's name is to give him high honor and veneration, and render his name sacred. We can add nothing to his essential glory; but we are said to honor and sanctify his name when we lift him up in the world, and make him appear greater in the eyes of others. When a prince is crowned, there is something added really to his honor; but when we crown God with our triumphs and hallelujahs there is nothing added to his essential glory. *He cannot be greater than he is—but we may make him appear greater in the eyes of others.*

III. When may we be said to hallow and sanctify God's name?

1. **When we profess his name.** Our meeting in his holy assembly is an honor done to his name. This is good—but it is not enough. All who wear God's livery by profession are not true servants; there are some professors against whom Christ will profess at the last day. "I will profess I never knew you" (Matt 7:23).

2. We hallow and sanctify God's name when we have a high appreciation and esteem of him and set him highest in our thoughts. The Hebrew word to honor, signifies to esteem precious. We conceive of God in our minds as the most super excellent and infinite good; we see in him a constellation of all beauties and delights; we adore him in his glorious *attributes*, which are the several beams by which his divine nature shines forth; we adore him in his *works*, which are bound up in three great volumes—*creation, redemption, and providence*. We hallow and sanctify his name when we lift him highest in our souls; we esteem him a super-eminent and incomprehensible God.

3. We hallow and sanctify his name when we trust in it. “We have trusted in his holy name” (Ps 33:21). There is no way can we bring more revenues of honor to God, or make his crown shine brighter, than by *confiding* in him. Abraham “was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom 4:20). Here was hallowing God's name. Unbelief stains God's honor and eclipses his name. “He who believes not God—has made him a liar” (1 Jn 5:10). So faith glorifies and hallows his name...

4. We hallow and sanctify God's name when we never make mention of it but with the highest reverence. His name is sacred, and it must not be spoken of but with veneration. When the Scripture speaks of God, it gives him his titles of honor. “Blessed be the Most High God” (Gen 14:20). “Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all praise” (Neh 9:5). To speak vainly or slightly of God is profaning his name, and is taking his name in vain. By giving God his venerable titles, we hang his jewels on his crown.

5. We hallow and sanctify God's name when we love his name. “Let those who love your name be joyful” (Ps 5:11). The love which honors God's name must be special and discriminating love — the cream and flower of our love; such as we give to none besides; as the wife honors her husband by giving him such love as she gives to none else — a marital love.

Thus, we hallow God's name by giving him such love as we give to none else — a love joined with worship. “He is your Lord; and worship you him” (Ps 45:2).

6. We hallow and sanctify God's name when we give him a holy and spiritual worship. It is the *purity* of worship, that God loves better than the *pomp*. It dishonors his name to bring anything into his worship which he has not instituted; as if he were not wise enough to appoint the manner in which he will be served. Men prescribe to him and super add their inventions; which he looks upon as offering *strange fire*, and as a high provocation... To give God outside worship, and not the devotion of the heart is to abuse him; as if one calls for wine and you give him an empty glass. We hallow God's name and sanctify him in an ordinance when we give him the vitals of religion, and a heart flaming with zeal...

7. We hallow and sanctify God's name when we ascribe the honor of all we do to him. “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name” (Ps 96:8). Herod, instead of hallowing God's name, dishonored it by assuming that praise to himself which was due to God alone (Acts 12:23). We ought to take the honor from ourselves—and give it to God. “I labored more abundantly than they all;” one would think this had savored of pride: but the apostle pulls the crown from his own head and sets it upon the head of free grace: “Yet not I—but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor 15:10). If a Christian has any assistance in duty, or victory over temptation, he rears up a pillar and writes upon it, “Hitherto the Lord has helped me.” John the Baptist transferred all the honor from himself to Christ; he was content to be eclipsed that Christ might shine the more. “He who comes after me is preferred before me” (John 1:15). I am but the herald, the voice of one crying; he is the prince. I am but a lesser star; he is the sun. I baptize with water only; he with the Holy Spirit. This is hallowing God's name, when we transfer all honor from ourselves to God. “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us—but unto your name give glory” (Ps 115:1).

8. We hallow and sanctify God's name by obeying him. How does a son more honor his father, than by obedience? “I delight to do your will, O my God” (Psalm 40:8). The wise men showed honor to Christ, not only by bowing the knee to him—but by presenting him with gold and myrrh (Matt 2:11). We hallow God's name, not only by lifting up our eyes and hands to heaven and bowing the knee in prayer—but by presenting him with golden obedience...

9. We hallow and sanctify God's name when we lift up his name in our praises. God is said to sanctify, and man is said to sanctify. God sanctifies us by giving us grace; and we sanctify him by giving him praise. What were our tongues given for but to be organs of God's praise? “Let my mouth be filled with your praise and with your honor all the day” (Ps 71:8). “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever” (Rev 5:13). Thus God's name is hallowed and sanctified in heaven; the angels and glorified saints are singing hallelujahs. Let us begin the work of heaven here. David sang forth God's praises and doxologies in a most melodious manner, and was, therefore, called the sweet singer of Israel (2 Sam 23:1). Praising God is hallowing his name; it spreads his renown; it displays the trophies of his excellency; it exalts him in the eyes of others. “Whoever offers praise, glorifies me” (Ps 123). This is one of the highest and purest acts of true religion.

In prayer we act like men; in praise we act like angels! Praise is the music of heaven, and a work fit for a saint. “Let the saints be joyful: let the high praises of God be in their mouth” (Ps 149:5-6). None but saints can in a right manner thus hallow God's name by praising him. As everyone has not skill to play on the violin and organ, so everyone cannot rightly sound forth God's harmonious praises; only the saints can do it; they alone can make their *tongue* and *heart* join in concert. “I will praise the Lord with my whole heart” (Ps. 111:1). “He was extolled with my tongue” (Ps. 66:17).

This hallowing God's name by praise is very befitting a Christian. It is unbefitting to murmur, which is dishonoring God's name; but it becomes the saints to be spiritual choristers, singing forth the honor of his name. It is called the “garment of praise” (Is 61:3). How lovely and handsome is this garment of praise for a saint to wear! “Praise is lovely for the upright” (Ps 33:1). Especially is it a high degree of hallowing God's name—when we can speak well of him and bless him in an afflicted state. “The Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). Many will bless God when he gives—but to bless him when he takes away, is in a high degree to honor him and hallow his name. Let us thus magnify God's name. Has he not given us abundant matter for praising him? He has given us *grace*, mercy spun and woven out of his affections; and he intends to crown grace with *glory*. This should make us hallow his name by being trumpets for his praise...

10. We hallow God's name by standing up for his truths. Much of God's glory lies in his truths. His truths are his oracles. He entrusts us with his truths as a treasure; we have not a richer jewel to entrust him with than our souls, nor has he a greater jewel to entrust us with than his truths. His truths set forth his glory. When we are zealous advocates for his truths, it is an honor done to his name. Athanasius was called the bulwark of truth; he stood up in the defense of God's truths against the Arians, and so was a pillar in the temple of God. *We had better have truth without peace, than peace without truth.* It concerns the sons of Zion to stand up for the great doctrines of the gospel; as the doctrine of the Trinity, the hypostatic union, justification by faith, and the saints' perseverance. We are bid to contend earnestly, to strive as in an agony for the faith—that is, the doctrine of faith (Jude 3). This contending for the truth, brings great revenues to heaven's treasury; and hallows God's name. Some can contend for *ceremonies* but not for the *truth*. We should count him unwise that should contend for a box of pennies, more than for his box of jewels.

11. We hallow and sanctify God's name by making as many proselytes as we can to him; when, by all holy expedients, counsel, prayer, example, we endeavor the salvation of others. How did Monica, Augustine's mother, labor for his conversion! She had sorer pangs in travail for his new birth than for his natural birth. It is hallowing God's name when we diffuse the sweet savor of godliness, and propagate true religion to others; when not only we ourselves honor God—but are instruments to make others honor him. Certainly when the heart is seasoned with grace, there will be an endeavor to season others. God's glory is as dear to a saint as his own salvation; and that this glory may be promoted he endeavors the conversion of souls. Every convert is a new member added to Christ. Let us then hallow God's name by laboring to advance piety in others; especially let us endeavor that those who are nearly related to us, or are under our roof, may honor God. “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh 24:15). Let us make our houses Bethels, places where God's name is called upon. Let the parent endeavor that his children may honor God... Read the Word, drop holy instruction, perfume your houses with prayer. This is hallowing God's name when we make proselytes to him, and endeavor that all under our charge should honor and sanctify his name.

12. We hallow and sanctify God's name by a holy life. “You are a royal priesthood, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you” (1 Pet 2:9). As an unholy life dishonors God's name, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you” (Rom. 2:24), so by our holy lives we honor God's name. A holy life speaks louder

than all the anthems and praises in the world. Though the main work of religion lies in the heart—yet when our light so shines, that others behold it, we glorify God. When our lives shine, his name shines in us. When we carry the picture of Christ about us in our holy example, we bring honor to God's name...

I may here take up a sad lamentation and speak, as the apostle Paul, weeping (Phil 3:18). Consider how God's name, instead of being hallowed and sanctified, is dishonored. His name, which is worth more than the salvation of all men's souls, suffers deeply. We are apt to speak of our sufferings; alas! what are all our sufferings! God's name suffers most. His name is the dearest thing he has. How do men stand upon their name and honor! God's name is this day dishonored; it is like the sun in an eclipse. Theodosius took it heinously when they threw dirt upon his statue; but what is far worse, disgrace is thrown upon the glorious name of Jehovah. His name, instead of being hallowed, is dishonored by all sorts of men...

Let us hallow and sanctify God's name. Could we but see a glimpse of God's glory, as Moses did in the rock, it would draw adoration and praise from us. Could we “see God face to face,” as the angels in heaven do, could we behold him sitting on his throne, at the sight of his glory we would do as the twenty-four elders, who “worship him that lives forever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power” (Rev 4:11). That we may be stirred up to this great duty of hallowing, adoring, and sanctifying God's name!

What thought from Thomas Watson’s words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Take time to look over and reflect on the things that you learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 20:7.

Our words are more important than we often realize. Consider Jesus' words in Matthew 12.

"You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:34-37)

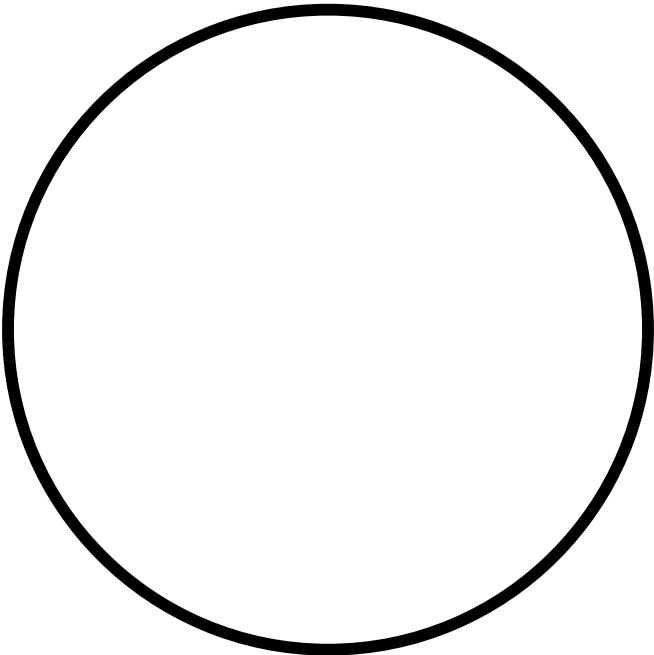
Jesus teaches us two vital truths in this passage:

1. Our words reveal our heart.
2. Our words reveal our destiny.

Even our *careless words*—the words that slip out without us thinking about them—reveal something about us. They give us a glimpse into the condition of our hearts. This is especially true when we flippantly, carelessly, or even jokingly talk about God. We show that we do not take God seriously, have no fear of His holiness, and think we have no accountability to Him.

Honestly evaluate the words that come out of your mouth during a typical day. Picture the circle to the right as representative of all your words in a day. If you divided up your words into a pie chart, what proportion of your words would fit into these categories:

- Praising God
- Giving thanks
- Encouraging others
- Teaching or helping others
- Complaining
- Gossiping
- Cursing
- Talking about meaningless things



Read and reflect on the following passages about our words. Mark key phrases as you read.

*I will bless the Lord at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul shall make its boast in the Lord;
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.
Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
And let us exalt His name together. (Psalm 34:1-3)*

*Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth;
Keep watch over the door of my lips! (Psalm 141:3)*

*The words of the reckless pierce like swords,
But the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Proverbs 12:18)*

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
And those who love it will eat its fruits. (Proverbs 18:21)*

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:29)

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Obscene and foolish talking or crude joking are not suitable, but rather giving thanks. (Ephesians 5:3-4)

Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. (James 1:26)

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. (James 3:7-10)

Write down 3-4 truths that you learn from these verses.

Take a moment right now to speak out praise and thanksgiving to God. Don't just speak from your heart but verbalize your praise. It is good for your ears to hear your mouth praising Him.

Next, take a moment to speak a word of encouragement to someone. They are made in the image of God so giving them encouragement is a way of honoring the Lord (Hebrews 3:13).

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

*We know metals by their tinkling,
and men by their talking.*

Thomas Brooks (1608-80)

*The tongue is you in a unique way.
It is the tattletale on the heart and
discloses the real person. Not only
that, but misuse of the tongue is
perhaps the easiest way to sin...
In Scripture, the tongue is variously
described as wicked, blasphemous,
foolish, boasting, complaining,
cursing, contentious, sensual and
vile. No wonder God put the
tongue in a cage behind the teeth,
walled in by the mouth!*

John MacArthur, Jr.

*What's in the well of the heart comes
up in the bucket of the mouth.*

Anonymous

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- When is the first time in your life that you can remember your mouth getting in trouble? What did you say? Why did you say it?
- What word, verse, or thought stands out to you as you read Exodus 20:7? Why?
- What does it mean to take the Lord's name in vain? What are some examples?
- What is the positive side of this command? What should we do instead?
- Why do you think God takes the use of His name so seriously? What does it say about us when we don't take His name seriously?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Thomas Watson? If so, what?
- Read through the Bible passages on page 28. What do you learn from these verses?
- Go around your group with each person sharing a word of praise and thanksgiving to God and sharing a word of encouragement to someone in the group.

PRACTICING REST
Exodus 20:8-11

DAY ONE
OBSERVATION

The fourth commandment—*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*—teaches Israel the importance of both work and rest. Their rhythm of our lives should match the rhythm that God established at creation.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 20:8-11 and parallel passages. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.”

.....

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. ² And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Genesis 2:1-3)

Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, ¹¹ but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove. ¹² Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed. (Exodus 23:10-12)

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹³ “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. ¹⁴ You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵ Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. ¹⁶ Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. ¹⁷ It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.’” (Exodus 31:12-17)

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

How was the Sabbath day to be kept “holy,” different from the other six days? (20:9-10)

Who were all the different people commanded to honor the Sabbath? (20:10)

What other things were to be given a Sabbath? (23:10-12)

What were the different reasons given for honoring the Sabbath? (see 20:11; 23:12; 31:13, 17)

What was the penalty for not honoring the Sabbath day? (31:14-15)

Why was the penalty so severe?

God did not need to rest after six days of creation because He was tired. He is of infinite power.

If that is true, then why do you think He rested on the seventh day? What was He teaching us?

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Deuteronomy 5:13-15 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God.
On it you shall not do any work,
neither you, nor your son or daughter,
nor your male or female servant,
nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals,
nor any foreigner residing in your towns,
so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do.*

*Remember that you were slaves in Egypt
and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.
Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. (NIV)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 20" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 20:8 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word "Sabbath" and click on the Strong's number (H7676) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for "Sabbath"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially Strong's Definitions.) _____

To get a better idea of the meaning of this word, click on the Root Word (Etymology) (H7673).

What is the root word for the "Sabbath"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

The Sabbath was to be a day set apart from the other days of the week. It was to be different. It was designed to "break one's routine" so that a person could not only rest from their typical work but also be refreshed emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Unfortunately, instead of becoming a day of rest and refreshment, the Sabbath eventually became a day of legalistic burden. Jewish tradition established 39 categories of forbidden work on the Sabbath, regulating the minutia of every day life from how far you walked to whether or not you could pluck out a hair on your chin.

Read Jesus' confrontation with Pharisees over these Sabbath rules in Mark 2-3.

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. ²⁴ The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" ²⁵ He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? ²⁶ In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." ²⁷ Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. ² Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. ³ Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

⁴ Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. ⁵ He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. ⁶ Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. (Mark 2:23-3:6)

What activities on the Sabbath do the Pharisees confront Jesus (and His disciples) with doing?

How does Jesus answer their objections? What does He teach about the Sabbath?

Like the other commandments in the Mosaic Covenant, the Sabbath “law” has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We are no longer under the Mosaic Law (Rom 6:14). It is no longer dictated that we must stop work from 6pm Friday to 6pm Saturday each week. Yet the principle of rest remains.

Read the following NT passages. Mark key words and phrases as you read.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (Colossians 2:16-17)

One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. (Romans 14:6-7)

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:9-11)

Write down 2-3 truths that you learn about the Sabbath from these NT passages.

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Charles Spurgeon's** sermon, *The Believer's Present Rest*. Spurgeon (1834-92) was a Baptist preacher in London, England. He has been called the "Prince of Preachers" because of his powerful sermons which were doctrinally rich, biblically deep, and oratorically beautiful.

"We which have believed do enter into rest."
Hebrews 4:3

THE text does not say that we who have believed shall enter into rest. That is a very great truth, but it is not the truth that is taught here. We "do enter into rest," even in this present life. All who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are already enjoying rest of heart and in proportion as faith possesses their souls, in that proportion they enjoy perfect rest. It is not a future privilege—it is a matter of present enjoyment...

It appears, from the connection in which these words appear, that the type and pattern of all true rest for men was the rest of God at the end of the six days of creation. After He had worked so wondrously and finished all His creative work, we read that the Lord "rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." It is not easy for us to understand how the rest of God could ever have been broken, yet there must have been a deeper kind of rest for Him on that seventh day than during the previous six days, for it is expressly said that God did rest then. Into that great mysterious deep we will not try to plunge, but we know that the Lord was pleased then to institute the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His own rest and that...He intended men to be partakers of it. God's grand ideal of man's happiness was that he should not only work, but that he should also rest.

What a wonderful restfulness there seems to be in every part of creation... Get away into the woods, traverse the wilds of nature, and see how restful everything is there. Note how the birds seem to have little else to do but to sing God's praises, mark how the very brooks warble as they flow, and how all creation that is untouched by man appears to delight in a deep, profound calm and peace. Had there been

no Fall, the world would have been all restful—there would have been no thorns or thistles to vex and wound, and add to man's labor—and no need for us to be ever asking for steam power with which to alleviate the burden of the toil of man. Sweat from a weary brow, or the throbbing of a tired brain would have been altogether unknown. Earth would have kept her Sabbath even as God kept His. But sin has come into the world and from that blessed state of rest, man has fallen. Yet God is bringing us back to a rest similar to that—and all who have believed in Jesus have been brought into it.

The Sabbath is to them the divine memorial of God's rest, the type of their own and also a continual reminder of the spiritual rest which they have found in Christ. There is another type of rest given us in the Word, namely, that of the children of Israel entering into the promised land... All the while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they were constantly moving to and fro, dwelling in tents and enjoying but little comfort. Notwithstanding all the blessings with which God enriched them in the wilderness, it was a wilderness, and Moses truly called it, "the waste howling wilderness." They had no rest there and they were always looking forward to the land flowing with milk and honey whither they were journeying. Their eager longing was for a land where they could settle down, build houses, plant vineyards, and dwell in quiet resting places.

Canaan is therefore the type of the rest which God intends to give His people here. It is not the type of heaven, except very imperfectly, for in Canaan there were Canaanites to be fought and to be gradually driven out, and there were some that were never driven out, but we thank God that there are no Canaanites to trouble the saints in heaven. Canaan is the true pattern and type of the believer's condition upon the earth.

We who have believed in Jesus have crossed the Jordan. He has divided it for us and we have entered into rest. It is true that the Canaanites are still in the land, but the Lord also is in the land, and by His grace, we shall surely drive them all out. We ought not to say that we hope to reach Canaan's peaceful shore by and by—we are on it now. If we have truly believed in Jesus, our condition is rightly typified by the Israelites in Canaan who had obtained their inheritance, for Jesus has obtained His inheritance, and God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

I. THE REST OF GOD

That rest of God, at the end of the six days of creation, was like the rest which the believer enjoys, for it spoke of a work that was finished. I need not refresh your memory with the familiar story of the creation—how the darkness had been divided from the light, how the waters above the firmament had been separated from the waters below the firmament, how the living creatures had begun to swarm in the deeps, and how, with rapid wing, the fowls of heaven were cleaving the air. I need not detail to you the springing up of the herb yielding seed after its kind, of the tree yielding fruit after its kind, the creation of cattle, and of creeping things, and of the beasts of the earth, and of man, the masterpiece of God. But you know that, when the sun set on the sixth day, God had finished all His work—there remained nothing to be completed. He had placed in the world all the creatures that were necessary to make up the complete circle of existence. There was no deficiency in any one, neither was there a lack of any one. The whole work of creation was finished and therefore God rested—He had other work to do—but from that particular work He rested and kept the Sabbath.

Now, can a Christian man ever come to that condition? Yes, that is the true condition of every Christian man. He sees the work of his own salvation completely finished. Has he done it himself? Oh, no! If he had attempted to

do it, he would have failed, and if any part of it had depended upon him, it would never have been accomplished. But the moment a sinner believes in Jesus, if he has been rightly instructed, he hears ringing from the cross of Calvary that gladsome sentence, "It is finished!" And he knows that the atonement is perfect, that the justifying righteousness needful is completed, that every covenant blessing is secured and guaranteed to him—and that all that was needed in order to lift the sinner from the very gates of hell up to the throne of God has been already wrought out and brought in by the great Redeemer, the incarnate Word of God. For the worlds were framed by the Word of God and by that same Word men are saved. By that Word the darkness fled, and life came and light—and by that same Word the darkness of our ruin has been dispelled, and the light and life of our salvation have come to us.

Beloved believer, remember that you are not partly saved, but you are wholly saved. The robe you wear today does not reach part of the way to cover you, but covers you from head to foot. The washing which the Savior has given you has not washed away a part of your spots, but you are clean every whit. And looking upon the work of your salvation as you receive it from the hands of Jesus, you may rest as God rested, and keep a long and blessed Sabbath just as God has kept it. He rested because His creative work was finished. You may rest because the work of your salvation is also finished.

Another reason why God rested on the seventh day was, that not only was the work finished, but all that was finished was good. We read that, at the conclusion of His six days' work, "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," and therefore He rested. And oh, what rest a believer gets when he looks on the finished work of Jesus Christ, and after examining every part of it, is able to say of it all, "It is very good!" To see Christ's work of covering sin, and to note how His substitutionary sacrifice has covered it so completely that even God Himself cannot see it, is indeed "very good." To realize that Christ has

sunk our sins into oblivion and made them cease to be—this also is “very good.” To look at Christ’s justifying righteousness and to mark how perfect it is—not a thread missing, no part of the goodly texture having a flaw in it—this too is “very good.” To see Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, to view Him in all His relationships and offices—this too is “very good.” Yes, beloved, this is the way to get the true rest which remains for the people of God.

II. THE REST OF GOD’S PEOPLE

We enter into rest concerning all dread of God and all terror on account of past sin. It is but a little while ago that our sins greatly alarmed us. We knew that God must punish us for them and therefore we could not rest. But those sins, which then disturbed us, have been forgiven—we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son—and now, we who have believed have no dread of punishment, no fear of the wrath to come, for we have entered into rest. I can truly say that this is my condition. Is it not yours also, my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ? If you really believe in Jesus, it must be.

We enter into rest concerning all fears of the future. As to any trouble we may have in this life, we know that God will overrule it for our good. As to the pangs of death, we know that the Lord will be with us and will sustain us in the valley of death. We have no fear of anything that may follow after death, for what can hurt or disturb those of whom Christ has said, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory”? We are delivered from all fear of judgment, for who shall condemn those whom God has justified? All dread as to our past sin is gone from us forever. Concerning past sin, our soul is even as a newborn child—we are cleansed from it by the precious blood of Jesus. And as for the future, we have no more dread about it than the angels in heaven have. They know that nothing can ever harm them, for they are God’s own chosen ones—and so are we if we are believers in Jesus Christ.

We also now have rest from all our former sinful works. Once we were the slaves of our own evil passions, and we were hurried hither and thither to degrading service by Satan and the lusts of the flesh. But now that the Son of God has made us free, we are free indeed. We find a joyous liberty in the ways of holiness and it is our constant delight to do the will of God. Thrice happy are we who have broken the bonds of sin and are no longer the servants of iniquity and are free from all servile works for self-salvation. Oh, I pity those poor people who are working to save themselves... That work is done and done forever. And now we work *from* life, not *for* life. Now we work because we are saved, not in order to be saved. Now we feel that we have not to win any merit by anything that we do, but that the infinite merit of Christ has already procured for us full acceptance with God. And what we have to do now is to show our gratitude to God for the divine work that is already completed. What a blessed thing it is to rest both from the sinful service of Satan and from the servile service of the law!

I trust that many believers can also say that **they have come to rest from all ambitious, discontented workings.** The worldly man is never satisfied—he always wants to be greater, wiser, richer, and more highly esteemed than he is. But he who truly believes in Jesus feels that God may do as He likes with him. If I am little, I thank God that He has many little ones whom He greatly loves. And if He makes me great, I thank Him because He will give me grace to bear my greatness with becoming humility. If I am poor, I will bless the Lord that He has promised that at least bread and water shall be given to those who trust Him. If He makes me rich, I will ask Him to give me the grace to use my substance for His glory. It is a blessed thing to come to such a pass as this about all worldly things and leave the disposal of all of them with God. Some people are always fretting and fuming. They appear to have been born in stormy weather and to be perpetually agitated in mind so that they cannot rest... But the more faith grows, the more rest grows.

We which have believed do enter into rest. It is not as a doer that you will get rest, but as a believer... My brothers and sisters in Christ, I beseech you to hold fast your faith. There are many things that will tempt you to live by your experience, to live by your feelings, to live by your attainments—but remember that sentence that is again and again repeated in Scripture, *The just shall live by faith...* Not we who have felt this or that, not we who think we are somebodies. But we who know that we are nobodies and hang alone upon Christ. There never was a more restful period to any of us than when we lay in our mother's bosom and just drank in our life's nourishment from her... Oh, to be always such a blessed babe as that, relying upon my God for all the strength I need! Then may I utter Paul's paradox, *When I am weak, then am I strong.* Though I am a fool, God is my wisdom. Though I am nothing at all, God is my All-in-all. This is the way to enter into rest...

Now, lastly, let me remind you, beloved, that this rest is perfectly consistent with labor. In Hebrews 4:11, the apostle says, *Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest.*

It is an extraordinary injunction, but I think he means, let us labor not to labor. Our tendency is to try to do something in order to save ourselves. But we must beat that tendency down and look away from self to Christ. Labor to get away from your own labors. Labor to be clean rid of all self-reliance. Labor in your prayers never to depend upon your prayers. Labor in your repentance never to rest upon your repentance, and labor in your faith not to trust to your faith, but to trust alone to Jesus. When you

begin to rest upon your repentance, and forget the Savior, away with your repentance. And when you begin to pray and you depend upon your prayers, and forget the Lord Jesus, away with your prayers. When you think you are beginning to grow in grace and you feel, "Now I am somebody," away with such spurious growth as that, for you are only being puffed up with pride and not really growing at all.

Labor not to labor. Labor to keep down your natural self-righteousness and self-reliance. Labor to continue where the publican was, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Labor to get where Mary was, sitting at the Master's feet and learning of Him... Labor also to show your gratitude to God for what He has done for you, and then labor to show your love to men.

You must not suppose that, when we enter into rest, it means that we are idle. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God rests, yet He works. Heaven is a place of rest, but it is not a place of idleness—there is holy service still to be done there, so you Christian people who are perfectly saved, devote all your strength to the winning of others for Christ. Show your love to Jesus by trying to find some of His lost sheep for Him... Rise, I pray you, and show that the motive of gratitude to God is a higher and more potent one than the selfish motive of seeking to save yourselves. Let those who want to save themselves go and work for themselves, but as for you who are saved, go and work for Jesus. And let your deeds of holy heroism prove that you are constrained by love to Him to do all that you can to bring others to trust in Him.

What thought from Charles Spurgeon's words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Reflect on what you have learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 20:8-11.

We live in a fast-paced society. Information hits us at lightning speed from all different directions. Distractions are everywhere. Change is happening all around us exponentially. Screens demand our time wherever we go. We can't even sit in a restaurant without visual media and non-stop music inundating our eyes and our ears. How do find rest in this kind of society?

Read and reflect on Luke 10:38-42.

While they were traveling, he entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and was listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand."

The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her."

What words would you use to describe Martha in this story?

What words would you use to describe Mary in this story?

Can you identify with Martha's frustration? What was she wanting Jesus to do?

Write out what Jesus tells Martha. _____

The story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10 is not designed to teach us that work is unnecessary or unspiritual. We were created to work! We were designed to plant, to water, to reap, to create, to repair, to clean, to organize, to help, to heal, to write, to calculate, to make things better.

Read the following biblical passages regarding work.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. (Genesis 2:15)

*The one who works his land will have plenty of food,
but whoever chases fantasies lacks sense. (Proverbs 12:11)*

Let the thief no longer steal. Instead, he is to do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. (Ephesians 4:28)

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3:23-24)

In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: "If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

Write down 3-4 truths that you learn about work from these verses.

Just as God both works and rests, we as humans, made in His image, were designed both for work and for rest. We are called both to a vocation and to a "vacation"—a time to take a break and enjoy the good things that God has blessed us with.

Learning to stop and rest is not always easy. Martha is a picture of many of us, running around convinced that everything depends on us. Unable to stop. Frustrated with others. Missing the moment. Neglecting to hear the gentle, quiet voice of the Lord. Unable to enjoy Him or His grace.

Be still and know that I am the Lord. (Psalm 46:10)

If Jesus were to observe your life, up close and in person, like He did Martha in this story, what do you think He would say to you? What would be His gentle but confronting word to you?

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

He who never works is unfitted for worship. He who never pauses to worship is rendered incapable of work... Man fulfills the ideal relationship to God only as he is both a worker and a worshipper.

G. Campbell Morgan

It is not God who loads us until we bend or crack with an ulcer, nervous breakdown, heart attack, or stroke. These come from our inner compulsions coupled with the pressure of circumstances.

Charles E. Hummel

If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. If you look at God, you'll be at rest.

Corrie ten Boom

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- What has been one of the most enjoyable, refreshing times that you can remember having with the Lord? What made this time so special?
- What word, verse, or thought stood to you from your study this week? Why?
- Why did God establish the Sabbath day? What was it designed to teach us?
- Israel failed on many occasions to rest on the Sabbath day...and never really enjoyed a Sabbath year which God also instituted. Why do you think they had such a hard time stopping and resting? Why do you and I have such a hard time stopping and resting?
- How do you picture a life of rhythm, truly balancing times of work and rest?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Charles Spurgeon? If so, what?
- Are you honoring a day of rest at least once per week? Are you taking time to enjoy the good things of life? Are you taking time to turn off media and detox your mind? Are you taking time to reflect on God and His Word? If not, why not? How can you change this?

HONORING AUTHORITY
Exodus 20:12

DAY ONE
OBSERVATION

The fifth commandment—*Honor your father and mother*—begins the second half of the Decalogue. The first four commandments focus on our relationship with God. The next six focus on our relationship with others.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 20:12 and parallel passages. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. (Deuteronomy 5:16)

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. ³‘Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God.’” (Leviticus 19:1-3)

⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

⁸ Hear, my son, your father’s instruction
And do not forsake your mother’s teaching;

⁹ Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head
And ornaments about your neck. (Proverbs 1:7-9)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. (Ephesians 6:1-3)

Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. (Colossians 3:20)

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

Fill out the following chart based on these passages.

	The Command(s)	The Reason(s)
Exodus 20:7		
Deuteronomy 5:16		
Leviticus 19:1-3		
Proverbs 1:7-9		
Ephesians 6:1-3		
Colossians 3:20		

Which reason given for honoring your parents captures your attention the most? Why?

Read 1 Timothy 5:3-4, 8. What does honoring your parents look like when they get older?

Support widows who are genuinely in need. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them learn to practice godliness toward their own family first and to repay their parents, for this pleases God... But 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. (1 Timothy 5:3-4, 8)

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read and meditate on Luke 2:51-52. This passage occurs when Jesus is twelve years old. He is left behind in Jerusalem by His parents and when they find Him, He is in the temple listening to the rabbis and asking questions.

His parents are naturally anxious and upset over the whole situation, but Jesus lets them know that they did not need to worry about Him because they should have known that He had to be about His Father’s business. Then the Gospel of Luke tells us these words.

*And He went down with them and came to Nazareth,
and He continued in subjection to them,
and His mother was treasuring all these things in her heart.
And Jesus was advancing in wisdom and stature,
and in favor with God and men. (LSB)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 20" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 20:12 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word "honor" and click on the Strong's number (H3513) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for "honor"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

In what different ways is this Hebrew word translated in the OT? (See KJV Translation Count.)

This Hebrew word is unique because it can be used in two different ways, depending on the context. The root idea of the word is "to make heavy." Thus, in a bad sense, it can be used to describe a "heavy heart," i.e., a hardened heart, which is how Pharaoh's heart is described in Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:7, 34; 10:1. However, it is mostly used in a positive sense to describe honoring someone, making them "weighty" in your eyes, respecting them, seeing them with great worth.

The New Testament uses a Greek word to describe what it means to "honor" someone.

Go back to blueletterbible.org and find "Ephesians 6:2." Find the word "honor" and click on the Strong's number (G5091) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the NT.

What is the Greek word for "honor"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the NT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

Read the following passages which use the word "honor." Mark key phrases as you read.

*Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain **honor** over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." And they did so. (Exodus 14:4)*

*You shall rise before the gray headed and **honor** the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:32)*

*Then He will elevate you above all the nations He has made and you will receive praise, fame, and **honor**. You will be a people holy to the Lord your God, as He has said. (Deuteronomy 26:19)*

***Honor** the Lord with your possessions,
And with the firstfruits of all your increase;
So your barns will be filled with plenty,
And your vats will overflow with new wine. (Proverbs 3:9-10)*

*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and **honor** Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. (Matthew 15:8)*

*All should **honor** the Son just as they **honor** the Father. He who does not **honor** the Son does not **honor** the Father who sent Him. (John 5:23)*

*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in **honor**. (Romans 12:10)*

*Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, **honor** to whom **honor**. (Romans 13:7)*

*Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double **honor**, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. (1 Timothy 5:17)*

***Honor** all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. **Honor** the king. (1 Peter 2:17)*

*Husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving **honor** to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)*

What does it mean to truly “honor” someone based on these verses? What does it look like?

Who should we honor according to these verses? _____

Why do you think honoring one’s parents (and other authorities) is so important?

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Charles Spurgeon's** sermon, *An Anxious Inquiry for a Beloved Son*. Spurgeon (1834-92) was a Baptist preacher in London, England. He has been called the "Prince of Preachers" because of his powerful sermons which were biblically deep and oratorically beautiful.

And the king said, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" 2 Samuel 18:29.

THIS was said by David after a great battle in which many had been slain and the hosts led by Absalom had fallen...perishing not only by the sword, but among the thick oaks and tangled briers of the forest... His father's anxious question concerned his wicked but still well-beloved son, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" He does not appear to have asked, "How have we won the victory?" but, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Not, "Is Joab, the captain of my host, alive, for upon him so much depends?" but, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Not, "How many of our noble troops have fallen in the battle?" but, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

It has been said that he showed here, more of the father than of the king—more of affection than of wisdom, and that is, doubtless, a correct criticism upon the old man's absorbing fondness. David was no doubt, in this case, weak in his excessive tenderness. But, brethren, it is much easier for us to blame a father under such circumstances than for us to quite understand his feelings. I may add, it would be wiser to sympathize, as far as we can, than to sit in judgment upon a case which has never been our own. Perhaps if we were placed in the same position, we should find it impossible to feel otherwise than he did.

How many there are at this present moment who have other very weighty businesses, but whose only thought just now is, "Is the young man safe? Is my son safe? Is my daughter safe? Is my father safe? Is my wife safe?" A vessel has gone down in the river with hundreds on board and weeping friends are going here and there, from place to place, hoping

and yet fearing to identify the corpse of some beloved one. They are longing to find one who has not been heard of since the fatal hour and trembling all the while, lest they should find him or her among the bodies which have been drawn from the cold stream. The one thought uppermost with scores tonight is this one—"Is my beloved one safe?"...

I. THE QUESTION OF ANXIETY

It is a question asked by a father concerning his son. "Is he safe?" The anxieties of parents are very great and some young people do not sufficiently reflect upon them, or they would be more grateful, and would not so often increase them by their thoughtless conduct. I am persuaded that there are many sons and daughters who would not willingly cost their parents sorrow, who, nevertheless, do flood their lives with great grief. It cannot always be innocently that they do this... There are some young men, especially, who in the indulgence of what they call their freedom, trample on the tender feelings of her that bore them, and frequently cause sleepless nights and crushing troubles to both their parents. This is a crime to be answered for before the bar of God, who has given a special promise to dutiful children and reserves a special curse for rebellious ones.

All parents must have anxieties. There is never a baby dropped into a mother's bosom but it brings care, labor, grief and anxiety with it. There is a joy in the parental relationship, but there must necessarily be a vast amount of anxious care with it throughout those tender years of infancy, in which the frail cockle-shell boat of life seems likely to be swamped by a thousand waves which sweep harmlessly over stronger ships. The

newly-lit candle is so readily blown out that mothers nurse and watch with a care which frequently saps the parental life.

But our children perhaps do not give us most anxiety when they are infants, nor when we have them at school, when we can put them to bed and give them a good-night's kiss and feel that all is safe. The heavy care comes afterwards—when they have broken through our control, when they are running alone and on their own account, when they are away from home, when they are out of the reach of our rebuke, and do not now feel as they once did, the power of our authority and hardly of our love. It is then for many parents, that the time of severe trial begins and doubtless, many a gray head has been brought with sorrow to the grave by having to cry, "I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me." Many a father and many a mother die, murdered, not with knife or poison, but by unkind words and cruel deeds of their own children...

Let us all think, who still have parents spared to us, how much we owe them. And let it be our joy, if we cannot recompense them, at any rate to give them so much of comfort by our conduct as shall show our gratitude. Let them have such joy in us that they may never regret the anxieties of past years, but may have their hearts made to rejoice that they brought into the world such sons and daughters. If we have had parents who cared for us and anxiously said, "Are they safe?" let us be grateful to God and let us never show that we undervalue His mercy by treating the gift with contempt.

Possibly some of you have your sons and daughters far removed from you, and I do not doubt that, if it is so, you often start at night with the question, "How fares it with my boy? How is it with my son?" He is far away, a sailor at sea, or in some distant country town engaged in earning his livelihood, and you wonder whether he is alive and well...

You wonder where he spends his evenings. You wonder into what sort of company he may have fallen; what sort of mates he lives with and what are the influences of his home. I am quite sure that such anxious questions frequently plow deep furrows across your minds. There are some young men here tonight in London, come to live in our great city and I want to kindly remind them of the tender thoughts about them at home—how mother and father, perhaps at this very hour, are thinking of them, praying for them. They would be grieved to know that he is beginning to forget the habits formed at home—that now in the room where others are sleeping he is afraid to bow his knee in prayer—that the Bible in which his mother wrote his name and concerning which the promise was given that there should be a portion read every day has not been read, but some book of very doubtful character has taken its place.

Young friend, some of us who are a little older know your experience of leaving home, and we trust you will know our experience of having been followed by the prayers and tears of parents, who have lived to rejoice that their prayers for us were abundantly answered. May it be so in your case, for, if not, you will go from bad to worse and perish in your sin. Yet it is very hard for a young man to go down to hell, riding steeple-chase over a mother's prayers. It takes a great deal of energy to damn yourself when a father and a mother are pleading for your salvation. And yet there are some who accomplish it. And when they come into the place of ruin and destruction, surely there shall be a heavier measure meted out to them than to those who were trained in the gutter and tutored in the street, and never knew what it was to be the subjects of parental prayer. O Lord Jesus, You who did raise the widow's dead son, save those sons who are dead in trespasses and in sins, who are even now being carried out to be buried in the tomb of vice and corruption.

Is the young man Absalom safe? ... There is a touching point about this. It is the question of a father about his rebellious son. Absalom—the young man Absalom—why should David be concerned about him? Was he not up in arms against David? Did he not thirst for his father's blood? Was he not at the head of a vast host seeking anxiously to slay his father that he might wear his crown, which he had already usurped? Why, I think David might have said, "Is the young man Absalom dead? For if he is out of the way there will be peace to my realm and rest to my troubled life." But no, he is a father and he must love his own offspring. It is a father that speaks, and a father's love can survive the enmity of a son. He can live on and love on even when his son seeks his heart's blood. What a noble passion is a mother's love or a father's love! It is an image in miniature of the love of God. How reverently ought we to treat it! ...

Our children may plunge into the worst of sins, but they are still our children. They may scoff at our God. They may tear our heart to pieces with their wickedness. We cannot take complacency in them, but at the same time, we cannot unchild them nor erase their image from our hearts. We do earnestly remember them still and shall do so as long as these hearts of ours shall beat within our bosoms...

At this time, I would address any young person who has been a great grief to those at home. Do you treat this matter lightly? Do your parents' anxieties seem to you to be foolishness? Ah, let me remind you that though your course of life may be sport to you, it is death to those at home. You may dry up your heart towards your mother, but your mother's heart still overflows with love to you. You may even count it a joke that you have caused her tears, but those tears are sincere, and reveal her inward agony of soul. Can you ridicule such tender affection? I have known some young people who have fallen so low as to have made mockery of

their parents' piety. It is a horrible thing to do, and woe unto those who have been guilty of it. Yet many Christian parents only return prayers and greater affection for such unkindness as this, and still go on to lay their children's case before God, and beseech Him for His mercy's sake to have mercy upon them. Now, erring young man, since there is something human remaining in you, I appeal to your tenderer nature that you will not continue to offend against such marvelous love, and will not wantonly go on to trample on such patient forgiveness. Absalom, if he could have heard his father ask the question, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" was, I doubt not, still bad enough to have rebelled against him. But I hope it is not so with anyone here. No, I trust that when the most willful shall see the deep and true love of their parents' hearts they will hasten to be reconciled to them, and spend the rest of their lives in undoing the ill which they have done.

II. THE ANSWERS WHICH WE HAVE TO GIVE TO THIS QUESTION

Is the young man Absalom safe? This question has often been sent up by friends from the country about their lads who have come to London—"Is my boy Harry safe? Is my son John safe?" Answer, sometimes—"No, no. He is not safe. We are sorry to say that he is in great danger." I will tell you when we know he is not safe. He is not safe if, like Absalom, he is at enmity with his father. Oh, no. He may attend a place of worship and he may profess to pray, and he may even take upon himself the name of a Christian, but he is not safe if he is at enmity with his parents. That will not do at all. Scripture says, "If a man loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" The words are quite as forceful if we read father instead of brother. If a man loves not his own parents on earth, how can he love his Father who is in heaven? No, no. He is not safe.

“Is the young man safe?” Well, no. We have seen him lately in bad company. He has associated with other young men who are of loose morals. He prefers to spend his evenings where there may be bare decency in the songs and the conversation, but scarcely more. No, the young man Absalom is not safe there. He may be very moral himself, but he will not long remain pure if he goes into such society. If you sit among coals, if you do not burn yourself, you will blacken yourself. If you choose bad company, if you are not absolutely made to transgress as they do, yet you will damage your reputation.

No, the young man Absalom is not safe. And he is not safe because he has taken to indulge in expensive habits. “Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.” This extravagance was a sign of evil. A youth who lavishes money upon needless luxuries is not safe... There are some young fellows scarcely out of their teens, or who have scarcely ended their apprenticeships, whose pocket money must be easy to count, who nevertheless indulge themselves in all sorts of extravagances. And when I see them doing so I feel sure that the “young man Absalom” is not safe.

Another thing. The young man Absalom is not safe, as you may see, if you look at his personal appearance. We read, “But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his feet even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he cut his hair, (for it was at every year’s end that he cut it because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king’s weight.” When young people are taken up with their own persons and are vain of their hair, their looks and their dress, we are sure that they are not safe, for pride is always in danger... I notice that when young people begin to be vain of their beauty and fond of

dress they are in great peril from various kinds of temptations. There is a canker-worm somewhere in their brain or their heart that will eat up their good resolutions and fair characters. No, the young man with his boasted beauty is not safe.

And we are sure the young man Absalom is not safe when he has begun to be vicious. You remember what Absalom did. I need not go into particulars. Now, many a young man, albeit he is not reckoned a bad fellow, has still gone astray in private life and if all secrets were laid bare, he would be almost ashamed to sit among respectable people who now receive him into their society...

“Is the young man Absalom safe?” No, David, he is not, for the last time we saw him he was in a battle, and the people were dying all around him and therefore he is not safe. How can he be safe where others fall? ...

“The young man Absalom is not safe”—not half so safe as he thinks he is—and all the less safe, because he thinks so much of himself, and is so particularly sure that he can conquer where other people perish. No, the young man Absalom is not safe. Now, the young man is here tonight who will answer to the next description. He is a very nice young fellow. All of us who know him love him and are right glad to see him among us. He is a great hearer and lover of the gospel word, but he is not decided. He has never taken his stand with God’s people, confessing Christ as his Lord. “You almost persuade me to be a Christian,” he has often said, but he is not quite persuaded yet. Is the young man safe? Oh, no. He is very hopeful, God bless him! We will pray him into safety if we can, but he is not safe yet. Those people who were almost saved from the wreck of the Princess Alice were drowned, and those persons who are almost saved from sin are still lost. If you are almost alive you are dead, if you are almost forgiven you are under condemnation, if you

are almost regenerated you are unregenerate, if you are almost a Christian you are without God and without hope, and if you die almost saved you will be altogether lost.

O my dear young brother, I wish that I could answer and say, “Yes, the young man Absalom is safe. He has taken the decisive step. He has resigned himself into the hands of Jesus and Jesus will keep him to the end.” May the Holy Spirit lead you to this...

I will now answer that question with a happy “Yes.” Yes, the young man Absalom is safe. Why? Well, first, because he is a believer in Christ. He has cast himself upon Jesus. He knew that he could not save himself, and so he came to Christ that Christ might save him, and he has left himself entirely in the hands of Jesus to be His forever and ever. The young man is saved, for he loves the gospel. He will not go to hear anything but the gospel. He sticks to the truth. He knows the unadulterated milk of the Word and he cannot be deceived and led astray with false doctrine, for that he hates. He does not gad about to go and hear this and that, but he knows what has saved his soul, and he holds fast the form of sound words.

The young man is safe. I know he is safe, for he is very humble. He is not perfect yet. He does not say that he is, nor boasts of his attainments. He does not need to be the fore

horse of the team. He is willing to be placed anywhere so that he can be useful. He often wonders if he is a Christian at all, and ascribes it all to divine grace. He is a lowly young man, and therefore he is safe enough, for such the Lord preserves.

Moreover, he is very modest of himself. He is afraid sometimes to put one foot before another for fear he should take a wrong step. He is always going on his knees to ask for direction. He waits upon God for guidance and does not dare to do anything without the direction of the word and the Spirit. He is a prayerful man and therefore he is safe, for who can hurt the man who dwells at the mercy seat?

He is also a very careful man in his daily walk. He labors to be obedient to the will of God. He aims at being holy, and to be holy is to be safe... The people of God love him and he loves them. He dwells among them and says of the house of God— “Here my best friends, my kindred dwell, Here God, my Savior reigns.” Write home to his father and all his friends, and say, “The young man is safe.” He is in Christ and he is in Christ’s church and he is seeking to serve God. He is beginning to work for the Master. He is trying to bring souls to Jesus. The Holy Spirit is working in him and by him to the glory of God. Yes, he is safe enough, for he is “Safe in the arms of Jesus.”

What thought from Charles Spurgeon’s words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Reflect on what you have learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 20:12.

There are at least three key principles that we can draw from the fifth commandment.

1. THE PRIORITY OF THE FAMILY

The fifth commandment sits right in the middle of the Ten Commandments. It is the bridge from the commands focused on our relationship to God to the commands focused on our relationship to others. Thus, how we treat and interact with our family is foundational to how we treat and interact with others. In other words, if we can't learn to show honor and respect to those in our family, then it is unlikely that we will be able to show honor and respect to anyone else.

Read Ephesians 5:21-6:4 and Colossians 3:18-21. Mark key words and phrases as you read.

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ “For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³² This is a profound mystery— but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

***6** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— ³ “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”*

⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

¹⁸ Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and don't be bitter toward them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they won't become discouraged.

What does God call each of the following to do in their families?

Wives: _____

Husbands: _____

Children: _____

Parents: _____

What is one way that you can apply this passage in your own relationship to your family?

2. THE PRIORITY OF THE CHURCH FAMILY

We may not all be married or have children, but, in Christ, we are all part of a spiritual family.

Read Titus 2:1-8. Mark key words and phrases as you read.

You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. ² Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

³ Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴ Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

⁶ Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. ⁷ In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸ and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

What does God call you to do in the family of God? (as an older or younger man or woman)

3. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SUBMIT TO AUTHORITY

Learning to honor and submit to our parents teaches us what it means to honor and submit to other authorities in our lives. Submission is vital in all of our relationships—member to church elders, employee to boss, citizen to government. Yes, there are times that *we must obey God, rather than man* (Acts 5:29). But this is the exception to the rule...not the rule itself. Our default as believers is to be willing to submit our wills to others for the good of the whole community.

Read Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17. Mark key words and phrases as you read.

Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God. ²So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. ⁴For it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong.

⁵Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience. ⁶And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's servants, continually attending to these tasks. ⁷Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor.

¹³Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority ¹⁴or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good. ¹⁵For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good. ¹⁶Submit as free people, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but as God's slaves. ¹⁷Honor everyone. Love the brothers and sisters. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Write down the different things that God calls us to do as members of society.

What reasons are given for behaving in this way?

What is one practical way that you can obey these passages in your own life?

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

To my eyes, a parent always yielding, and a child always having its own way, are a most painful sight – painful, because I see God’s appointed order of things inverted and turned upside down – painful, because I feel sure the consequence to that child’s character in the end will be self-will, pride, and self-conceit. You must not wonder that men refuse to obey their Father which is in heaven, if you allow them, when children, to disobey their father who is upon earth.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child!

Williams Shakespeare (1564-1616)

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- What do you (or did you) most respect or admire in your father? In your mother?
- Has it been easy or hard for you to honor your parents? Why?
- What word, verse, or thought stood to you from your study this week? Why?
- What does it mean to “honor your parents”? How important is it according to God’s Word?
- What limits do you think there are on honoring your parents? How can it be taken too far? How does it change when you get older?
- If you are a parent, what has been the hardest part with parenting? Why? What do you want most from your children?
- What responsibility do we have to other authorities in our lives?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Charles Spurgeon? If so, what?
- Share one struggle that you are currently having in your family. Pray for one another.

PROTECTING LIFE
Exodus 20:13

DAY ONE
OBSERVATION

The sixth commandment—*Thou shalt not murder*—is perhaps the most well-known of the Ten Commandments and the one most universally applied. Any culture that does not respect human life is a “dead culture.”

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 20:13 and parallel passages. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

You shall not murder.

.....

²⁶ Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, overall the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

⁵ “Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man.

⁶ “Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man.

⁷ And as for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Bring forth abundantly in the earth
And multiply in it.” (Genesis 9:5-7)

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. ²³ Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.” (Matthew 5:21-26)

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

The sixth commandment is only two words in Hebrew (*lo tirsah*) but these two words carry the weight of the entire biblical view of the sanctity of life. Human life is to be honored and protected because of the inherent value of human life. This value is rooted in the creation narrative.

According to Genesis 1:26-27, what makes human life so special and unique?

The sanctity of human life is not erased by humanity's fall into sin. In Genesis 9, God reiterates the value of human life. **Complete the following sentences from Genesis 9:5-7.**

Surely for your lifeblood, I will demand a _____.

From the hand of every man's _____, I will require the life of man.

Whoever sheds man's blood, by man, his _____ shall be shed.

What reason is given for this demand of a life for a life? (Genesis 9:6) _____

In Matthew 5:21-26, Jesus interprets the heart principle behind the sixth commandment.

What was Jesus' interpretation of this command (5:21-22)? _____

The sixth command calls us to much more than just not physically killing someone. It calls us to the high value of human life and to the respect of each person as made in the image of God.

How does Jesus apply God's command (5:23-26)? _____

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Matthew 5:21-22 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*You have heard that it was said to those of old,
‘You shall not murder;
and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’*

*But I say to you
that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment;
whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council;
and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. (ESV)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type “Exodus 20” into the “Search the Bible” box. Click on Exodus 20:13 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word “kill” and click on the Strong’s number (H7523) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for “kill”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially the Outline of Biblical Usage and Strong’s Definitions.)

Though this Hebrew word is translated as “kill” in the King James Version, the meaning of this word is more closely tied to our English word, “murder” (as modern translations translate it).

Read the following OT passages which use this Hebrew word. Mark key phrases as you read.

*If anyone strikes someone a fatal blow with an iron object, that person is a **murderer**; the **murderer** is to be put to death. ¹⁷Or if anyone is holding a stone and strikes someone a fatal blow with it, that person is a **murderer**; the **murderer** is to be put to death. ¹⁸Or if anyone is holding a wooden object and strikes someone a fatal blow with it, that person is a **murderer**; the **murderer** is to be put to death. ¹⁹The avenger of blood shall put the **murderer** to death; when the avenger comes upon the **murderer**, the avenger shall put the **murderer** to death. ²⁰If anyone with malice aforethought shoves another or throws something at them intentionally so that they die ²¹or if out of enmity one person hits another with their fist so that the other dies, that person is to be put to death; that person is a **murderer**. The avenger of blood shall put the **murderer** to death when they meet. (Numbers 35:16-21)*

*If anyone strikes down a person, the **murderer** shall be put to death at the mouth of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness. Moreover, you shall not take ransom for the life of a **murderer** who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death. (Numbers 35:30-31)*

*If anyone **kills** his neighbor unintentionally without having hated him in the past—as when someone goes into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down a tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities [of refuge] and live...*

But if anyone hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and attacks him and strikes him fatally so that he dies, and he flees into one of these cities, then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there, and hand him over to the avenger of blood, so that he may die. Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, so that it may be well with you. (Deuteronomy 19:4b-5, 11-13)

According to these passages, what designates someone as a “murderer”?

What is the penalty for someone who murders another human being? Why?

Next, go to blueletterbible.org and look up Matthew 5:22. Find the word “angry” and click on the Strong’s number (G3710) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the NT. In this particular case, **click on G3709** under Strong’s definition to bring up the root word for anger.

What is the Greek root word for “anger”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the New Testament? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (See Outline of Biblical Usage. Also click on *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* and scroll down to the Notes section which describes the difference between *thumos* and *orge*.)

Anger in our hearts has a way of manifesting itself in our words and in our actions. In Matthew 5:22, Jesus describes the danger of words spoken to someone out of anger. Such anger in our words shows our disregard and hatred for others and our desire to attack them at their core.

Next find the word “Raca” in Matthew 5:22 and click on the Strong’s number (G4469) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the New Testament.

What is the Greek word for “Raca”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the New Testament? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (See Outline of Biblical Usage and Strong’s definition.)

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Thomas Watson's** book on *The Ten Commandments*. Watson (1620-86) was an English Puritan pastor and writer. His works reflect his uncompromising devotion to Christ and are known for their simplicity, richness, and faithfulness to God's Word.

You shall not murder. Exodus 20:13

In this commandment is *a sin forbidden*, which is murder, and *a duty implied*, which is, to preserve...the life of others.

The sin forbidden, is murder.

1. We must not injure another in his NAME. "A good name is a precious balsam." It is a great cruelty to murder a man in his name. We injure others in their name when we slander them... This is to behead others in their good name; it is an irreparable injury. *No physician can heal the wounds of the tongue!*

2. We must not injure another in his BODY. Life is the most precious thing; and God has set this commandment as a fence about it, to preserve it. He made a statute which has never to this day been repealed. *Whose sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed* (Gen 9:6). In the old law, if a man killed another *unwillingly*, he might take sanctuary; but if he killed him *willingly*, though he fled to the sanctuary, the holiness of the place would not defend him. *If someone deliberately attacks and kills another person, then the slayer must be dragged even from my altar and put to death* (Ex 21:14). In the commandment, "You shall do no murder," **all sins are forbidden which lead to it, and are the occasions of it.** As,

Anger. Anger boils in the veins, and often produces murder. "In their anger they slew a man" (Gen 49:6).

Envy. Satan envied our first parents the robe of innocence, and the glory of paradise, and could not rest until he had procured their death. Joseph's brethren, because his father loved him, and gave him a "coat of many colors," envied him, and took counsel to slay him (Gen 37:20). Envy and murder are near akin, therefore the

apostle puts them together. *Envyings, murders* (Gal 5:21). Envy is a sin which breaks both tables at once; it begins in discontent against God, and ends in injury against man, as we see in Cain (Gen 4:6-8). Envious Cain was first discontented with God, by which he broke the first table; and then fell out with his brother and slew him, and thus broke the second table. *Anger* is sometimes "soon over," like fire kindled in straw, which is quickly out; but *envy* is deep rooted, and will not quench its thirst without blood. "Who is able to stand before envy?" (Pr 27:4).

Hatred. The Pharisees hated Christ because he excelled them in gifts, and had more honor among the people than they. They never left him until they had nailed him to the cross, and taken away his life. Hatred is vermin which lives upon blood. "Because you have had a perpetual hatred, and have shed the blood of the children of Israel" (Ezek 35:5). Haman hated Mordecai because he would not bow to him, and presently sought revenge, by getting a bloody warrant sealed for the destruction of the whole race and seed of the Jews (Esther 3:9). Hatred is ever cruel. All these sins are forbidden in this commandment.

How many ways is murder committed?

(1) With the **hand**; as Joab killed Abner and Amasa. "Amasa didn't notice the dagger in his left hand, and Joab stabbed him in the stomach with it so that his insides gushed out onto the ground" (2 Sam 20:10).

(2) With the **mind**. Malice is mental murder. "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer" (1 Jn 3:15). To malign another, and wish evil against him in the heart, is murdering him.

(3) With the **tongue**, by speaking to the harm of another, and causing him to be put to death. Thus the Jews killed the Lord of life, when they

inveighed against him, and accused him falsely to Pilate (Jn 18:30).

(4) With the **pen**. Thus David killed Uriah by writing to Joab to set Uriah in the forefront of the battle (2 Sam 11:15). Though the Ammonites' sword killed Uriah—yet David's pen was the cause of his death; and therefore the Lord tells David by the prophet Nathan, “*You have killed Uriah*” (2 Sam 12:9).

(5) By **plotting** another's death. Thus, though Jezebel did not lay her own hands upon Naboth—yet because she contrived his death—she was the murderer (1 Kgs 21:9-10) ...

(6) By having an **intention** to kill another; as Herod, under a pretense of worshiping Christ, would have killed him (Matt 2:8-13). So, when Saul made David go against the Philistines, he designed that the Philistine should have killed him. “Let not my hand be upon him—but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him” (1 Sam 18:17). Here was the *intent* to murder, and it was in God's account as bad as actual murder.

(7) By **consenting** to another's death; as Saul to the death of Stephen. “I also was standing by and consenting unto his death” (Acts 22:20). He who gives consent, is accessory to the murder.

(8) By not **hindering** the wrongful death of another, when in our power. Pilate knew Christ was innocent. “I find no fault in him,” he said—but did not hinder his death; therefore he was guilty. Washing his hands in water, could not wash away the guilt of Christ's blood.

(9) By **unmercifulness**. By taking away that which is necessary for the support of life; as to take away the tools or utensils by which a man gets his living. “It is wrong to take a pair of millstones, or even just the upper millstone, as a pledge, for the owner uses it to make a living” (Dt. 24:6). Or by not helping him when he is ready to perish. You may be the death of another by not relieving him as by doing him violence. If you do not feed him who is starving, you kill him. How many are thus guilty of the breach of this commandment!

(10) By **not executing** the law upon capital offenders. A felon having committed six murders, the judge may be said to be guilty of five of them, because he did not execute the felon for his first offence.

What are the aggravations of this sin of murder?

(1) To shed the blood of another causelessly; as to kill another in a humor or frolic. A bee will not sting unless provoked—but many when not provoked, will take away the life of another. This makes the sin of blood more bloody. The less provocation to a sin the greater sin...

(2) To take away the life of any public person enhances the murder, and makes it greater, as to kill a judge upon the bench, because he represents the king's person. To murder a person whose office is sacred, and comes on the King of heaven's embassy; the murdering of whom may be the murdering of many. Herod added this sin above all, that he shut up John the Baptist in prison, much more to behead him in prison (Lk 3:20). To stain one's hands with royal blood. David's heart smote him because he did but cut off the corner of king Saul's garment (1 Sam 24:5). How would David's heart have smitten him if he had cut off Saul's head?

(3) To shed the blood of a near relation aggravates the murder, and dyes it of a deeper crimson. For a son to kill his father is horrid. Parricides are monsters in nature. *He who takes away his father's life, commits many sins in one*; he is not guilty of murder only—but of disobedience, ingratitude, and diabolical cruelty. “He who *strikes* his father or mother, shall be surely put to death” (Ex. 21:15). Then how many deaths is he worthy of, who *destroys* his father or mother! Such a monster was Nero, who caused his mother, Agrippina, to be slain.

(4) To shed the blood of any righteous person aggravates the sin. Hereby justice is perverted. Such a person being innocent, is unworthy of death. A saint being a public blessing, lies in the breach to turn away wrath; so that to destroy him is to pull down the pillars of a nation. He

is precious to God (Ps 116:15). He is a member of Christ's body; therefore what injury is offered to him is done to God himself (Acts 9:4).

Though, however, this commandment forbids *private* people to shed the blood of another, unless in their own defense—yet, such as are in public office must punish *public offenders*, even with death. *To kill an offender is not murder—but justice.* A private person sins if he *draws* the sword; a public person sins if he *puts up* the sword. A magistrate ought not to let the sword of justice rust in the scabbard. As he should not let the sword be too sharp by *severity*, so neither should the edge of it be blunted by too much *leniency*.

Neither does this commandment prohibit a **just war**. When men's sins grow ripe, and abundance of goods has bred abundance of sin, God says, *Sword, go through the land* (Ezek 14:17). He encouraged the war between the tribes of Israel and Benjamin. When the iniquity of the Amorites was full, he sent Israel to war against them (Judges 11:21).

It should be for a lamentation that this land is defiled with blood (Num 35:33). How common is this sin in this boasting age! England's sins are written in letters of blood. Some make no more of killing *men*, than *sheep!* ... May not the Lord justly take up a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *blood touches blood* (Hos 4:2). These are wholesale murders...

Beware of having your hands imbrued in the blood of others. "But such a one has wronged me by defamation, or otherwise; and if I spill his blood, I shall but revenge my own quarrel!"

If he has done you wrong, the law is open; but take heed of shedding blood. What! Because he has wronged you, will you therefore wrong God? Is it not doing wrong to God, to take his work out of his hand? He has said, *Vengeance is mine; I will repay* (Rom 12:19). You would undertake to revenge yourself; would be plaintiff, and judge, and executioner, in yourself. This is a great wrong done to God, and he will not hold you guiltless.

To deter all from having their hands defiled with blood, **consider what a sin murder is.**

(1) Murder is a God-affronting sin. It is a breach of his command, and trampling upon his royal edict. It is a wrong offered to God's image. *In the image of God He made man* (Gen 9:6). It is tearing God's picture...

(2) Murder is a crying sin. "The voice of blood cries to Heaven." ... This cries so loud, that it drowns all the other cries. *The voice of your brother's blood cries unto me from the ground* (Gen 4:10). Abel's blood had as many tongues as drops, to cry aloud for vengeance!

Though the Lord judges every sin—yet he will in a special manner *make inquisition for blood* (Ps 9:12). If an animal killed a man—it was to be stoned, and its flesh was not to be eaten (Ex 21:28). If God would have an animal stoned, which killed a man, which had not the use of reason to restrain it; much more will he be incensed against those who, against both reason and conscience, take away the life of a man.

(3) Murder is a diabolical sin. It makes a man the devil's first born, for he was a murderer from the beginning (Jn 8:44). By saying to our first parents, "You shall not die," he brought death into the world.

(4) Murder is a cursed sin. If there is a curse for him who *smites* his neighbor secretly, he is doubly cursed, who *kills* him (Deut 27:24). The first man who was born was a murderer. "And now are you cursed from the earth" (Gen 4:11).

(5) Murder is a wrath-procuring sin... It procures **temporal** judgments... *Vengeance as a bloodhound pursues the murderer.* "Bloody men shall not live out half their days" (Ps 55:23).

It brings **eternal** judgments. It binds men over to hell... Let all impenitent murderers read their doom in Rev 21:8: "Murderers shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Such as have their hands full of blood must undergo the wrath of God. Here is fire mingled with blood.

The positive duty implied in the command is, that we should do all the good we can to ourselves and others.

1. In reference to OTHERS. We are to preserve the life of others. We should comfort them in their sorrows, relieve them in their needs, and like the good Samaritan, pour wine and oil into their wounds. “I was a father to the poor” (Job 29:16). It is a great means of preserving the life of another to relieve him when he is ready to perish...

True grace makes the heart tender, it causes sympathy and charity. As it melts the heart in *contrition towards God*, and in *compassion towards others*. “He has dispersed, he has given to the poor” (Ps 29:9). This commandment implies that we should be so far from *ruining* others, that we should do all we can to preserve the lives of others. When you see the picture of death drawn in their faces, administer to their necessities; be temporal saviors to them; draw them out of the *waters of affliction* with a *silver cord of charity*. That I may persuade you to this, let me lay before you some arguments:

(1) Works of charity evidence grace. Charity evidences saving FAITH. “I will show you my faith by my works” (Jm 2:18). Works are faith's letters of credence. We judge of the health of the body by the pulse; so Christian, judge of the health of your faith by the *pulse of charity*. The Word of God is the *rule* of faith, and good works are the *witnesses* of faith. Love loves mercy; it is a noble bountiful grace. Mary loved Christ, and how liberal was her love! She bestowed on Christ her tears, kisses, and costly ointments. Love, like a full vessel, will have vent; it vents itself in acts of liberality.

(2) To communicate to the necessities of others is not left to our choice—but is an incumbent duty. “Charge those who are rich in this world—that they do good; that they be rich in good works” (1 Tim 6:17-18). This is not only a counsel—but a charge. If God should lay a charge upon the inanimate creatures, they would obey; if he should charge the rocks, they

would send forth water; if he should charge the clouds, they would melt into showers; if he should charge the stones, they would become bread. And shall we be harder than the stones, not to obey God when he charges us to *be rich in good works*?

(3) God supplies our needs, and shall not we supply the needs of others? We could not live without mercy. God makes every creature helpful to us: the *sun* to enrich us with its golden beams; the *earth* to yield us its increase, veins of gold, crops of corn, and store of flowers. *God opens the treasury of his mercy; he feeds us every day out of the alms-basket of his providence.* “You open your hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing” (Ps 145:16). Does God supply our needs, and shall we not minister to the needs of others? Shall we be as a *sponge* to suck in mercy, and not as *fountains* to give it out to others?

(4) Herein we resemble God, to be doing good to others. It is our excellence to be like God... When are we more like him—than in acts of bounty and munificence? *You are good and do good* (Ps 119:68). The more helpful we are to others, the more like we are to God. We cannot be like God in omniscience, or in working miracles; but we may be like him in doing works of mercy.

(5) God remembers all our deeds of charity, and takes them kindly at our hands. “God is not unrighteous to forget your labor of love which you have showed towards his name, in that you have ministered to the saints” (Heb 6:10). The chief butler may forget Joseph's kindness—but the Lord will not forget any kindness we show to his people. “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matt 25:35-36). Christ takes the kindness done to his saints—as done to himself. God has a bottle for your tears, and a book to write down your acts of mercy...

(6) Hardheartedness to others reproaches the gospel. When men's hearts are like pieces of rock, or as the scales of the leviathan, *rows of scales, closely sealed together*, you may as well extract oil out of flint, as the *golden oil of charity* out of them (Job 41:15). They unchristianize themselves. Unmercifulness is the sin of the heathen. "Unmerciful" (Rom 1:31). It eclipses the glory of the gospel. Does the gospel teach uncharitableness? "Those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good" (Titus 3:8). While you relieve not such as are in need, you walk in opposition to the gospel; you cause it to be evil spoken of, and lay it open to the lash and censure of others...

(7) To do good to others keeps up the credibility of religion. Works of mercy adorn the gospel, as the fruit adorns the tree. When *one's light so shines that others see our good works*, it glorifies God, crowns religion, and silences the lips of gainsayers. Basil says nothing rendered the true religion more famous in the primitive times, and made more proselytes to it—than the bounty and charity of Christians...

By all this, be ready to distribute to the necessities of others. This is included in the commandment, *You shall not kill*. Not only you shall not destroy another's life—but you shall preserve it by ministering to his necessities.

It is implied that we should endeavor to preserve the **souls** of others: counsel them about their souls; set life and death before them; help

them to heaven. In the law, if one met his neighbor's ox or donkey going astray, he must bring it back to the owner (Ex. 23:4). Much more, if we see our neighbor's soul going astray, we should use all means to bring him back to God by repentance...

2. In reference to OURSELVES

The commandment also requires that we should preserve our own life and soul. It is engraved upon every creature that he should preserve his own natural life. We must be so far from self-murder, that we must do all we can to preserve **natural life**. We must use all means of diet, exercise, and lawful recreation, which, like oil, preserves the lamp of life from going out. Some have been tempted by Satan to believe they are such sinners that they do not deserve a bit of bread, and so they have been ready to starve themselves. This is contrary to the commandment, *You shall do no murder*, which implies that we are to use all proper means for the preservation of life...

If the life of the *body* must be preserved, much more the life of the *soul*. If he who does not provide for his own family is worse than an infidel, much more he who does not provide for his own soul (1 Tim 5:8). A main thing implied in the commandment is a special care for preserving our souls. *The soul is a jewel, a diamond set in a ring of clay*. Christ puts the soul in balance with the world, and it outweighs all. *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?* (Mt 16:26).

What thought from Thomas Watson's words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Reflect on what you have learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 20:13.

Read and reflect on the following passages of Scripture.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:21-24)

No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. (James 3:8-10)

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (1 John 3:14-15)

According to these verses, in what ways do we violate the spirit of the sixth commandment?

Each person is made in God’s image. And when we mistreat others, slander them, gossip about them, or hurt them, we are attacking God’s image.

- Is there someone that you have recently attacked with your words? Yes No
- Is there someone that has been hurt or offended by something you did? Yes No
- If so, have you asked for their forgiveness or sought reconciliation with them? Yes No

If you truly saw every individual as made in the image of God and a priceless treasure in His eyes, how would it change the way you treat them? Speak to them? Talk about them?

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Since the Lord has bound the whole human race by a kind of unity, the safety of all ought to be considered as entrusted to each... Thus the sixth commandment prohibits the murder of the heart, and requires a sincere desire to preserve our brother's life. The hand commits the murder, but the mind, under the influence of wrath and hatred, conceives it.

John Calvin (1509-64)

There are ways in which men can be destroyed short of murder. *We can destroy a man's reputation, we can shake somebody else's confidence in him by whispering criticism or by deliberate fault-finding. That is the kind of thing...included in this commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." Killing does not only mean destroying life physically, it means trying to destroy the spirit and soul, destroying the person in any shape or form.*

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- What is the first time that you can remember someone attacking you with their words? How did this impact you? How does it still impact you today?
- What word, verse, or thought stood to you from your study this week? Why?
- How should the fact that each person is made in the image of God impact the way that we see others? Talk about others? Treat others?
- How does the sixth commandment relate to capital punishment? To the fighting of a war? Can the taking of life ever be justified? If so, how?
- How is an abiding anger toward another person a violation of the sixth commandment?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Thomas Watson? If so, what?
- In what ways have you violated the spirit of the sixth commandment in your own life?
- In what ways can you live out the spirit of the sixth commandment this week?

PROTECTING MARRIAGE

Exodus 20:14

DAY ONE

OBSERVATION

The seventh commandment—*Thou shalt not commit adultery*—elevates the importance of protecting marriage to just below protecting life itself. Marriage is the foundational relationship for the stability of a society.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 20:14 and parallel passages. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

You shall not commit adultery.

.....

¹⁸ And the Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” ¹⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

²¹ And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²² Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. ²³ And Adam said:

“This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.”

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:18-25)

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

³¹ “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. (Matthew 5:27-32)

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

Like the sixth commandment, the seventh commandment echoes back to God’s original design at creation. Just as we are to protect life because it is sacred and valuable, so we should protect marriage because it is sacred and valuable.

What is the one thing that is described as “not good” in God’s original creation? (Genesis 2:18)

Write down three things that you learn about the woman from this passage. (Genesis 2:18-23)

Write down three things that you learn about marriage from Genesis 2:24.



Protecting marriage is more than just avoiding the physical act of adultery. Just like Jesus brings out the spirit of the sixth commandment in Matthew 5:21-26, He also brings out the spirit of the seventh commandment in Matthew 5:27-32.

What two things does Jesus say violate the spirit of the seventh commandment?

Matthew 5:28 _____

Matthew 5:32 _____

To what extent does Jesus say we should go to protect marriage? (Matthew 5:29-30)

What exception does Jesus give for divorce? (5:32) _____

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Genesis 2:23-25 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*Then the man said,
“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”*

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother
and hold fast to his wife,
and they shall become one flesh.
And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (ESV)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 20" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 20:14 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word "adultery" and click on the Strong's number (H5002) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for "adultery"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially Strong's Definitions and Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon.)

Read the following OT passages which use this Hebrew word. Mark key phrases as you read.

*"If a man commits **adultery** with the wife of his neighbor, both the **adulterer** and the **adulteress** shall surely be put to death."* (Leviticus 20:10)

*The eye of the **adulterer** watches for dusk.*

He thinks, 'No eye will see me,' and he keeps his face concealed. (Job 24:15)

*The one who commits **adultery** lacks sense;*

Whoever does so destroys himself. (Proverbs 6:32)

*This is the way of an **adulteress**:*

She eats and wipes her mouth and says,

"I've done nothing wrong." (Proverbs 30:20)

*"Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, **commit adultery**, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My Name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations?"* (Jeremiah 7:8-10)

*Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites,
because the Lord has a charge to bring
against you who live in the land:*

"There is no faithfulness, no love,

no acknowledgment of God in the land.

There is only cursing, lying and murder,

*stealing and **adultery**.*

They break all bounds,

and bloodshed follows bloodshed. (Hosea 4:1-2)

Write down 3-5 things that you learn about the sin of adultery from these passages.

Next, go to Matthew 5:32 on blueletterbible.org. Find the word “fornication” and click on the Strong’s number (G4202) to bring up the Greek word, its definition, and its usage in the NT.

What is the Greek root word for “fornication”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the New Testament? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? (Note especially the Outline of Biblical Usage.)

Read the following NT passages which use this Greek word. Mark key phrases as you read.

*[Jesus] went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—**sexual immorality**, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” (Mark 7:20-23)*

*Flee from **sexual immorality**. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever **sins sexually**, sins against their own body. (1 Corinthians 6:18)*

*It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid **sexual immorality**; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7)*

Write down 3-5 things that you learn about the sin of sexual immorality from these passages.

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **G. Campbell Morgan's** book on *The Ten Commandments*. Morgan (1863-1945) was a highly influential British pastor, theologian, and author known for his commitment to expository preaching (verse-by-verse from the Bible) and his dynamic, engaging preaching style.

You shall not commit adultery. Exodus 20:14

Immediately after the commandment declaring the sacredness of human life follows that which safeguards the highest earthly relationship... God's first circle of society is that of the family, and the origin of the family in His purpose lies within the sacred unity of man and woman.

The first principle of human life is its relationship to God. The second is its interrelation, that of man to man. Within this second realm the type and origin of all subsequent relations is the family. Nothing can be more essential for the social order than that the relationship upon which all subsequent ones are based should be jealously guarded against every form of attack.

The unity of the race is the purpose of God. This grows out of the unity of husband and wife. The union of husband and wife is not capricious but essential; for *God created man in His own image ...male and female created He them.* (Gen 1:27)

The unity of husband and wife is thus the unity of the expression of the Divine image. Both are necessary to give full expression to the Divine. The duality is the only expression of a most sacred and holy power of procreation.

Such a consideration as this reveals at once the tremendous force of this seventh commandment and explains its binding nature upon the race in all ages and places. The actual words of the command are directed against the sin of unchastity as violating the sacred rights of the marriage relation. Its spirit emphatically forbids all unchastity, for if this sense of essential unity in marriage be admitted...then it at once becomes evident that all unchaste conduct before marriage, on the part of man or woman, is a wrong done to the marriage that is to be; and unfaithfulness before marriage is as much adultery as unfaithfulness after marriage.

There is no subject, perhaps, more difficult to deal with faithfully, and yet there is none demanding more honest and fearless handling.

I. The Command

The command is a simple, unqualified, irrevocable negative. *Thou shalt not!* No argument is used, no reason given, because none is required. The sin is so destructive and damning in nature that it is in itself sufficient cause for the stern forbidding. To emphasize the commandment, therefore, it is only necessary to consider the sin against which it is directed. A sevenfold vice is this sin of unchaste conduct, being sin against the Individual, Family, Society, Nation, Race, Universe, and God.

1. It is a sin against the Individual. This needs no proof. Nature visits the sin with the heaviest penalties in every department of the complex being of man. The terrible results of unchaste life in the purely physical realm are such as cannot be named here. They are well known. Every man of science will bear testimony to the awful demand that Nature makes for purity, and will assert that she has no pity for the unclean. The statistics of lunacy in this and all lands could tell horrible tales of the effect of unclean life upon the mental side of man's nature. Many sad stories prove that the highest spiritual culture and usefulness have been marred and ended by the sin of yielding unlawfully to lust. The perfect unity and balance of spirit, soul, and body is destroyed by this vice...

2. It is a sin against the Family. The sacredness of motherhood and childhood, and the demands they make upon the care and thought of all, are secured and met in the Divine institution of marriage. Wherever the rights of the marriage relationship are violated and set aside, God's provision for both is broken down, and the disastrous result of the breakdown of the family

results. The race is to be trained in groups, and the power and provision for such training is the government of the essential love of parents. As the fifth commandment clearly teaches, the two sides of parenthood are necessary to the nurture of child-life. When the family is destroyed as a perfect whole by the sin of unchastity, an incalculable harm is done to the children...

3. It is a sin against Society. This follows from the previous consideration. The family is a unity of individuals sharing a common life and governed by a common love. Society is a union of families. Every attempt to create society on any other basis ends in disaster... The attempts to organize societies upon common interests of trade or intellectual pursuits all break down sooner or later. Society is the accumulation of families, and all the human interrelations of property, of reputation, and of character break down with the breakdown of the family...

4. It is a sin against the Nation. This, again, moves out as a logical sequence from the former considerations... The greatness of a people depends upon the purity and strength of the people, and in every nation where the marriage relation is violated with impunity the virus of death is surely at work. This is at once proved by the lurid lights that flash from the decay of Assyria, Greece, and Rome. In this respect it is most true that *righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.* (Prov. 14:34)

5. It is a sin against the Race. No man can deny his accountability for a share in the development or destruction of the race. The solidarity of humanity is more than a dream of visionaries. It is an indisputable fact. Every life is contributing its quota of force to the forces that make or mar... The agony of degraded humanity is a curse upon the unchastity of the past, and every licentious man or woman is inflicting new wounds, not only upon the immediate present, but also upon the years yet unborn. The voice of the human race, so often unheard in the clamor of the interests of the passing moment, is thundering perpetually the Divine command, *Thou shalt not commit adultery!*

6. It is a sin against the Universe. The life of the universe is love. The origin of all is love, for *God is love.* The propagation of all is love. From the highest form, that of the unity of the marriage relation, through all the lower spaces of action, love is the law of growth. The lair of the wild beast is fiercely guarded by the love that holds it sacred. The nesting of the birds is token of the impulse of the love-life that throbs through all creation. The bee that carries the pollen from flower to flower is the messenger of the same instinct. Love is everywhere. The sin of lustful unchastity is the violation of love, blighting and destroying it. Let every adulterer and adulteress know, then, that their impurity sins against all the genius of the universe, and if they but listen, every love of man and maiden, every devotion of the beasts to their mates, every song of bird, and every hum of the wing of summer bee, proclaims the heinousness of their offence against the whole creation.

7. It is a sin against God. This has virtually been said in every previous argument. Every human being is made in His image. Of every family, He is the true Father. In all society He is the Shepherd. Over all nations, He is King. The race is His own to its utmost limit. The law of love is the will of God for all. Thus, lastly and consequently, every impure act or person strikes a blow at the very heart of God...

Thus the seventh commandment is seen to be binding and inexorable because of the purpose of God... To minimize the law against impurity is to deny the value of love.

II. Application of the Command Today

There are certain signs of the times which point to the necessity for this commandment.

The first of these is the tendency, which is only too apparent, to loosen the binding nature of the marriage tie. There seems to be an increasingly popular notion that the marriage relation is a civil one only. This is a vital error. It is wholly Divine. The lawfulness of the married state lies within the supreme fact of sex, and this is a part

of the Divine creation. God, who thus created, has conditioned the law of union, and every marriage is, therefore, a part of a Divine plan.

Alas! too constantly the relationship is entered upon without any recognition of God, and hence the awful misery that often ensues, for no human being can tamper with Divine matters without being harmed. Once the union is consummated it is for the period of life.

There is only one reason for its disannulling until death, and that is the far more awful fact than death, that, namely, of fornication. The prevalent notion that incompatibility of temperament is sufficient reason for divorce is a blow at the very throne of God; and also, therefore, at the foundations of human well-being...

Another sign of the times in this direction is the filthy fiction which has polluted the realm of literature in recent years—fiction in which the marriage relation is treated with amused pity, and adulterers are pitied and excused, if not defended. Such literature is the most pernicious prostitution of a free press that any country can suffer from... So long as the nation is in thousands of its members impure, such reading will be provided and read; but surely every member of the Christian Church should be true to the unalterable law of love expressed in this commandment, and that not only in their own personal lives, but in the influence they exert...

Moreover, the distortions of the female form that are common everywhere are alike an insult to beauty and to goodness, and therefore to God. I am not pleading for the uniform of the Salvationists, nor even the bonnet of the Pentecostal League, but for the becoming and beautiful and modest attire, which shall have no

possible suggestiveness that is not in harmony with the homage and reverence that man should ever render to woman. This is a subject that seems to be of no moment to some. Let every daughter of the King think the subject out alone with her Master, and that which I have failed to say will be understood.

III. The Christian Ethic

After all that has been said, there yet remain the most scorching words of all to repeat. They fell from the lips of the Incarnate Purity in that manifesto of His Kingdom which He gave to His disciples... Let them be read as He uttered them: "I say unto you, that every one that looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye causes thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand causes thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body go into hell. It was said also. Whosoever should put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce: but I say unto you, that every one that puts away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, makes her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away commits adultery." (Matt. 5:28-32.)

If this law be obeyed, the impure act will for evermore be prevented, for this ethic passes beyond the act to the thought. According to this teaching the wish proves capacity for the deed, and is to be condemned equally with the deed. The eye and the hand are precious, but not so precious as purity of spirit. At the severest cost the law of love is to be obeyed.

What thought from G. Campbell Morgan's words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Reflect on what you have learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 20:14.



The marriage bond is to be the strongest human bond on earth. If it fails, then all other relationships are impacted. If we can't remain committed to the one person that we voluntarily and solemnly pledge lifelong commitment to, then no relationship is secure.

Yet, as Jesus said, the *hardness of the human heart* (Matt. 19:8) often means that marriages are neglected, discarded, and violated by one party or even by both.

Regardless of whether you are married or not, God calls us to a heart of purity.

Evaluate your eyes. What did you feed your mind this week through the lens of your eyes?

Is there something that is consistently pulling you into sin and into lustful desires (i.e., internet sites, TV shows, smartphone apps, etc.)? If so, are you willing to remove them from your life?

Write down what you can specifically do to pursue greater purity in your thought life.

If you are married, take time this week to evaluate your marriage. How can you strengthen your marriage bond? What can you do this week to renew your commitment to your spouse?

If you are single, offer your mind and body to the Lord. Let Him be your greatest love and security. What can you do this week to strengthen your relationship with other believers in Christ?

If you are widowed or divorced, take time to reflect on God's goodness and grace. Allow Him to heal any hurts or wounds in your heart. What can you do this week to find deeper peace in Him?

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

As God by creation made two of one, so again by marriage He made one of two.

Thomas Adams (1583-1652)

The happy state of matrimony is undoubtedly the surest and most lasting foundation of comfort and love, the cause of all good order in the world, and what preserves it from the utmost confusion.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-90)

The one who divorces without the cause of fornication makes his wife to suffer adultery. He has broken his vows to her to care for her... The woman is treated like a piece of property that has received the stamp "DEFECTIVE," when it is the stamper who is morally defective.

William Luck

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- What was your parents' marriage like? How has it impacted your view of marriage today?
- What word, verse, or thought stood to you from your study this week? Why?
- What do you learn about God's design for marriage from Genesis 2:24?
- Even ancient cultures described adultery as "the great sin." What makes adultery such a great sin? What impact does it have on the individual, children, the family, and society?
- In what ways is marriage under attack in our culture? How can we protect marriage?
- What thought from Jesus' words in Matthew 5:27-32 strikes you the most? Why?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of G. Campbell Morgan? If so, what?
- Share a prayer request for your marriage or for your family. Pray together for God to strengthen your own family, to strengthen the families in your church, and to strengthen the family of believers in the body of Christ.

PROTECTING PROPERTY

Exodus 20:15

DAY ONE
OBSERVATION

The eighth commandment—*Thou shalt not steal*—establishes the principle of private property and prohibits the taking of property from others. It also encourages wise stewardship of that which we do own.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 20:15 and parallel passages. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

You shall not steal.

.....

God blessed them. God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:28)

Whoever steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. ²If a thief is caught breaking in at night and is struck a fatal blow, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; ³but if it happens after sunrise, the defender is guilty of bloodshed. Anyone who steals must certainly make restitution, but if they have nothing, they must be sold to pay for their theft. ⁴If the stolen animal is found alive in their possession—whether ox or donkey or sheep—they must pay back double. (Exodus 22:1-4)

Do not move your neighbor’s boundary marker, established at the start in the inheritance you will receive in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess. (Deuteronomy 19:14)

If a man is found stealing one of his brothers of the people of Israel, and if he treats him as a slave or sells him, then that thief shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. (Deuteronomy 24:7)

Do not move an ancient boundary stone,
Or take over the fields of the fatherless,
For their Protector is strong;
He will plead their case against you. (Proverbs 23:10-11)

The commandments, **Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet;** and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: **Love your neighbor as yourself.** Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:9-10)

Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. (Ephesians 4:28)

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

The eighth commandment echoes back to God’s design for humanity to subdue and have dominion over the earth. In doing so, mankind is given the ability and the responsibility to create, produce, build, possess, improve life on earth, and steward wisely the things that one owns.

Fill out the chart below based on these passages.

What Is Stolen?		What Is the Penalty?
Exodus 22:1, 4		
Exodus 22:2-3		
Deut. 19:14, Prov. 23:10-11		
Deut. 24:7		

What commandment sums up all the other commandments? (Romans 13:9-10)

Why? How does this commandment prevent one from breaking all the other commandments?

Instead of stealing, what should a person do? (Ephesians 4:28)

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Romans 13:9-10 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*For the commandments,
“You shall not commit adultery,”
“You shall not murder,”
“You shall not steal,”
“You shall not bear false witness,”
“You shall not covet,”
and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying,
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (NKJV)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 20" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 20:15 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word "steal" and click on the Strong's number (H1589) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for "steal"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

Read the following OT passages which use this Hebrew word. Mark key phrases as you read.

*Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had **stolen** the household idols that were her father's. And Jacob **stole away**, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. (Genesis 31:19-20)*

*[And Joseph said to him:] "Remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. For indeed I was **stolen away** from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon." (Genesis 40:14-15)*

*He who **kidnaps** a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death. (Exodus 21:16)*

*You shall not **steal**, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. (Leviticus 19:11)*

*If a man is discovered **kidnapping** one of his Israelite brothers, whether he treats him as a slave or sells him, the **kidnapper** must die. You must purge the evil from you. (Deuteronomy 24:7)*

*Israel has sinned. They have violated my covenant that I appointed for them. They have taken some of what was set apart. They have **stolen**, deceived, and put those things with their own belongings. (Joshua 7:11)*

*Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he **stole** the hearts of the people of Israel. (2 Samuel 15:6)*

*People don't despise the thief if he **steals**
To satisfy himself when he is hungry.
Still, if caught, he must pay seven times as much;
He must give up all the wealth in his house. (Proverbs 6:30-31)*

Two things I request of You
(Deprive me not before I die):
Remove falsehood and lies far from me;
Give me neither poverty nor riches—
Feed me with the food allotted to me;
Lest I be full and deny You,
And say, “Who is the Lord?”
Or lest I be poor and **steal**,
And profane the name of my God. (Proverbs 30:7-9)

“Therefore behold, I am against the prophets,” declares the Lord, “who **steal** My words from each other.” (Jeremiah 23:30)

Write down 3-5 things that you learn about the sin of stealing from these passages.

Behind the eighth commandment is the presupposition that owning private property is good. In fact, when the people of Israel later ask for a king (in order to be like the other nations), Samuel warns them of the power of a king (or government) to take what is theirs for his own desires.

Samuel told all the Lord’s words to the people who were asking him for a king. ¹¹ He said, “These are the rights of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and put them to his use in his chariots, on his horses, or running in front of his chariots. ¹² He can appoint them for his use as commanders of thousands or commanders of fifties, to plow his ground and reap his harvest, or to make his weapons of war and the equipment for his chariots. ¹³ He can take your daughters to become perfumers, cooks, and bakers. ¹⁴ He can take your best fields, vineyards, and olive orchards and give them to his servants. ¹⁵ He can take a tenth of your grain and your vineyards and give them to his officials and servants. ¹⁶ He can take your male servants, your female servants, your best cattle, and your donkeys and use them for his work. ¹⁷ He can take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves can become his servants. ¹⁸ When that day comes, you will cry out because of the king you’ve chosen for yourselves, but the Lord won’t answer you on that day.” (1 Samuel 8:10-18)

Highlight or mark the word “take” in this passage. What things will a king or a ruling authority take from the people when they are given complete power to rule over them?

The people refuse to listen to Samuel because they want a king to fight their battles and make life easy for them (1 Sam. 8:19-20). Though governing authorities are instituted by God, they violate the spirit of the eighth commandment when they take and eliminate private property.

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **G. Campbell Morgan's** book on *The Ten Commandments*. Morgan (1863-1945) was a highly influential British pastor, theologian, and author known for his commitment to expository preaching (verse-by-verse from the Bible) and his dynamic, engaging preaching style.

You shall not steal. Exodus 20:15

At this point the Decalogue passes from the discussion of the essential facts of human life to matters of lesser importance. By the phrase "of lesser importance," it is not intended to suggest that they are unimportant, but in the words of Jesus, "Life is more than meat"; and up to this point the commandments have forbidden sins which interfere with the relation of man to God, or harm in any way the life of man in itself. In the Mosaic economy, violation of any of the first seven commandments incurred the death penalty. This was not so with regard to the last three, proving that in the realm of comparison the first seven are of greater importance. To the mind of God, worship and the relation of the worshipper to Himself are matters of supreme importance.

The rebellious nature of sin is remarkably evidenced by the fact that human laws have inverted the order of this importance. At the present moment, laws protecting property are far more numerous upon the statute-books of all lands than laws protecting life...

So much having been said as to the relative value of the commandment, now turn to a consideration of this law dealing with the question of human possession—*Thou shalt not steal*.

There is urgent need for close attention to this commandment, for while the actual act of stealing is looked upon increasingly as vulgar, yet the day is characterized by a multiplication of methods of theft... "Business acumen," "the habit of the trade," "imperialism," are all phrases used under certain circumstances, where the true fact of the case might be expressed in the one, less pleasant-sounding, but far more truthful, word "theft"... Let there be an honest facing of the Divine purpose as marked in the command, "Thou shalt not steal."

I. The Command

The command is, first of all, a recognition of the rights of property. It gives the lie to the dictum of [Pierre-Joseph] Proudhon, the father of anarchism—"Property is theft!" Property is not theft. Man is by his creation able to possess, and to deny the possibility of possessing property is to make theft impossible. In the last analysis all possessions belong to God, as all wealth is created by God. Man, in his relation to God, is ever compelled to own that nothing he possesses can be held to be outside of the right of divine interference. Man in relation to man can claim to possess, outside the right of human interference, this being clearly recognized by the command.

While thus recognizing the rights of property, the commandment forbids any violation of these rights... It will at once be seen that there are only three ways in which man can come into possession of anything:

1. By the free gift of another person
2. By toil, which receives it as a wage
3. By theft, the taking that from another which belongs to him.

The commandment recognizes the first two, and forbids the third. The reason for this will be discovered by an examination of the three. The first two are based upon the essential laws of human interrelation; namely, love and work. The first of such is the law of love. The gift bestowed by one upon another is an expression of love, and becomes the property of the one to whom it is given. Something earned by toil, for the possession of which the work done has been a legitimate return, in that it has also benefited the person who received it, is property.

Theft violates both of these laws. The thief cannot love the person from whom he steals,

and it is very difficult for the person from whom the theft is made to love the thief. The thief violates the law of toil by attempting to possess without toil, and thus to take from another something for which no equivalent return is made. Thus the commandment recognizes the true rights of property, the rights of love and work, and forbids the possession of anything save upon the condition of obedience to these laws.

II. The Light of the New Testament

This may be gathered from one remarkable passage—*Let him that stole steal no more : but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need* (Eph. 4:28). It will immediately be seen that the argument of the preceding section is here gathered tip and stated with startling force. Mark well the antithesis. On the one side, stealing, the false method of possession; on the other, working and giving, the true methods. This is a drawing of the line with surprising definiteness. According to this, all property which has not been obtained by working or by giving, is stolen property. Every item possessed has either been bestowed as a gift, or worked for, or stolen. Apply this to much of the social, commercial, and national life of our time, and a great deal of vaunted morality will be seen to be grossest immorality.

But the New Testament carries the idea further, and lays upon the strong the burden of the weak, declaring that property is to be gained by work, not merely that it may be possessed, but that the over-abundance may be given to the disabled brother by the way, who has lost his power to work, and yet may not steal. Thus, within the new economy of the “holy nation,” that man also steals who simply works for the satisfaction of his own necessity, and fails to recognize the strenuous claim of the common life he shares with the weakest member of his community. This last statement has reference strictly to those who are living immediately within the Kingdom of God. But, as the very genius of the life of that kingdom is that of

caring for and loving the unfit and the unworthy, no man who claims to have put the crown of his being upon the brow of the Christ is truly loyal to his King save as he wins by toil possessions that he may pass on to the most needy and afflicted.

III. Its Application to Our Own Times

Broadly stated, the eighth commandment forbids all forms of communism which deny man's right to property. Of course, the word property is used throughout this article in its simplest as well as in its broadest sense. Anything honestly obtained is property, be it ever so small or large. It, moreover, denies all right to property, save that of gift or work. All that a man possesses as the result of gifts freely bestowed, or of work honestly done, is secured to him by this enactment; and whosoever shall come into possession of any such property, save by the free gift of the present owner, or as return for work rendered, is to be branded as a thief, and punished accordingly. Therefore, the commandment arrests all men that possess anything which they have obtained in any way, save as the free gift of another, or in return for work rendered. This commandment, then, strikes at many different forms of stealing, which are being practiced today...

Even in the most respectable and moral society, some forms of common theft have come to be looked upon as regrettable lapses, rather than sin against God. One illustration will suffice. It would be interesting, but extremely painful, to pass through the homes of thousands of Church members, instituting a rigid examination as to the ownership of all the books to be found therein. The habit of borrowing books is in itself harmless, but the appalling extent of the carelessness as to the return of the same is hardly realized, because people forget that to borrow a book and not to return it is a theft. If these sentences should cause the discovery of some of my books, and they are returned to me, I shall be forever grateful for having had this opportunity of enforcing the eighth commandment.

The sin of stealing is terribly prevalent in the matter of fraudulent getting. In this age, when a man's "worth" is estimated by the amount he possesses, the lust of possession seems to destroy the principle of honesty in thousands of those who in other matters are scrupulously careful. In certain circles, also, trickery, dishonesty, lying, are all looked upon as evidences of shrewdness and acumen in business matters. The commandment that governs a very large percentage of commercial life today is not *Thou shalt not steal*, but *Thou shalt not be found out*.

Unjust weights, false measures, and (by far the most common of all) lying advertisements, all break the eighth commandment. Nothing need be said of the long-firm swindles, and the bogus companies that are so common, save this, that God Almighty will hold every person guilty of a breach of the eighth commandment who has given his or her name to any such enterprise without having carefully and personally examined the honesty or dishonesty thereof.

Then the whole habit of gambling is of the essence of theft, and this for the reason that it is a means by which men come into possession of property which is a violation of both the laws upon which property may alone be held. A man who gambles, whether by play or betting, puts into his pocket, money for which he has done no honest work; and by the very act he robs the man from whom he receives, and violates the law of love. Among all the foolish things that the enemies of righteousness have ventured to say, no person has yet been found foolish enough to write a book on the bond of brother-

hood existing among betting men, or the social possibilities of gambling. It is, moreover, a fact that ought not to pass unnoticed, that the gambling fever is the cause of more petty larceny and wholesale fraud than any other form of sin. There is no more insidious evil sapping away the integrity and uprightness of the nations of the earth today than this lust for possession without toil, which lies at the root of all gambling. It behooves all lovers of God and men, resolutely and without apology, to thunder the words of the eighth commandment in the ears of all gamblers, whether their practices are gilded by the glory of a court or tarnished by the vulgarity of a slum. The gambler is a thief in the sight of God, and ought, therefore, to be so in the sight of all honest men...

The commandment is broken again and again every day within the great realm of capital and labor. How often today might the words of James 5:4 be quoted: *Behold, the hire of the laborers...which is of you kept back by fraud, cries out; and the cries have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth*. It is lamentable, but equally true, that many a working man robs his master in that he withholds his fair share of honest labor, while he takes his wage. To capital and labor, the eighth commandment has a double message. First, a fair day's wage for a fair day's work; and, secondly, a fair day's work for a fair day's wage...

The communion of the Church is that of love, not of theft, and within the borders of the kingdom the command is as binding as ever — *Thou shalt not steal*.

What thought from G. Campbell Morgan's words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Reflect on what you have learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 20:15.

In what area(s) of life are you most prone to violate the spirit of the eighth commandment?

- Taking things from others
- Borrowing without returning
- Plagiarizing another's work
- Slacking off at work
- Being stingy with what I own
- Gambling for quick gain
- Not paying what I owe
- Engaging in digital piracy
- Refusing to give to others

Read and reflect on Paul's words in 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life.

How does Paul describe God in this passage? _____

What is the danger of someone who has a lot of possessions and wealth in this world?

What does Paul exhort us to do with our possessions and wealth in this world?

God created us as embodied creatures to enjoy the good things of this world. He also created us to work, to be productive, and to make life better in this world. We should not feel guilty for enjoying material things nor should be stingy and greedy with the things that we do possess. Learning to give freely is one of the best ways to obey the spirit of the eighth commandment.

If you have the resources, give an unexpected gift of blessing to someone in need today.

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

*There is only one sin, only one.
And that is theft. Every other sin is
a variation of theft... When you kill
a man, you steal a life... When you
tell a lie, you steal someone's right
to the truth. When you cheat, you
steal the right to fairness.*

Khaled Hosseini

*No one has to teach young children
the injustice of theft; they know
from an early age that to lose a
possession to someone else
unjustly is wrong.*

R. C. Sproul

*Earn all you can, save all you can,
and give all you can.*

John Wesley (1703-91)

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- Can you ever remember stealing something as a kid? Maybe taking something from a store or taking something from someone else? What happened? How did you feel afterwards?
- On the other side of the coin, have you ever been stolen from? How did this make you feel?
- What word, verse, or thought stood to you from your study this week? Why?
- What are some of the ways that we can violate the spirit of the eighth commandment?
- What implications can the eighth commandment have toward government and the proper functioning of a society?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of G. Campbell Morgan? If so, what?
- What does the New Testament teach as the antidote to a life of stealing?
- Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19 together. What observations can you make from this passage?
- As a group, think of a way that you can bless someone unexpectedly with a financial gift.

TELLING THE TRUTH

Exodus 20:16

DAY ONE
OBSERVATION

The ninth commandment—*Thou shalt not bear false witness*—addresses the importance of truth-telling. Being able to trust someone and take them at their word is vital for a healthy relationship and a civil society.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 20:16 and parallel passages. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

.....

If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, ¹⁷ then both men in the controversy shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. ¹⁸ And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, ¹⁹ then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. (Deuteronomy 19:16-19)

Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone;
For the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.
Everyone utters lies to his neighbor;
With flattering lips and a double heart they speak. (Psalm 12:1-2)

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord,
But those who deal truthfully are His delight. (Proverbs 12:22)

A man who bears false witness against his neighbor
Is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow. (Proverbs 25:18)

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ ³⁴ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.” (Matthew 5:33-37)

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him. (Colossians 3:9-10)

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

What is the penalty for someone who bears false witness against someone? (Deut. 19:16-19)

What do each of these passages say about the person who lies or bears false witness?

Psalm 12:1-2	
Proverbs 12:22	
Proverbs 25:18	

What do each of these passages say that we should do instead of bearing false witness?

Proverbs 12:22	
Matthew 5:33-37	
Ephesians 4:25	
Colossians 3:9-10	

What reasons are given for speaking the truth? _____

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Colossians 3:8-10 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these:

- anger,*
- rage,*
- malice,*
- slander,*
- and filthy language from your lips.*

*Do not lie to each other,
since you have taken off your old self with its practices
and have put on the new self,
which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (NIV)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 20" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 20:16 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word "false" and click on the Strong's number (H8267) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for "false"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

Read the following OT passages which use this Hebrew word. Mark key phrases as you read.

*Stay far away from a **false** accusation. Do not kill the innocent and the just, because I will not justify the guilty.* (Exodus 23:7)

*Do not swear **falsely** by My name, profaning the name of your God; I am the Lord.* (Leviticus 19:12)

*Let their **lying** lips be silenced,
For with pride and contempt
They speak arrogantly against the righteous.* (Psalm 31:18)

*No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house;
No one who speaks **falsely** will stand in my presence.* (Psalm 101:7)

*I hate and abhor **falsehood**,
But I love Your instruction.* (Psalm 119:163)

*Lord, rescue me from **lying** lips and a deceitful tongue.* (Psalm 120:2)

*These six things the Lord hates,
Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:
A proud look,
A **lying** tongue,
Hands that shed innocent blood,
A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that are swift in running to evil,
A **false** witness who speaks lies,
And one who sows discord among brethren.* (Proverbs 6:16-19)

*The Lord abhors a person who **lies**,
But those who deal truthfully are His delight.* (Proverbs 12:22)

*Friend deceives friend,
And no one speaks the truth.
They have taught their tongues to lie;
They weary themselves with sinning. (Jeremiah 9:5)*

*“Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor;
And do not love a false oath.
For all these are things that I hate,”
Says the Lord. (Zechariah 8:17)*

Write down 3-5 things that you learn about lying from these passages.

The reason that lying is wrong is because it violates the truth, which is the very character of God.

Read the following passages which describe the importance of truth.

*God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent;
Has He said, and will He not do it?
Or has He spoken, and will He not establish it? (Numbers 23:19)*

*Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart. (Psalm 15:1-2)*

Behold, You delight in truth in the innermost being. (Psalm 51:6a)

*Every word of God proves true;
He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. (Proverbs 30:5)*

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)

When we tell the truth who are we following? _____

When we speak lies who are we following? _____

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **G. Campbell Morgan's** book on *The Ten Commandments*. Morgan (1863-1945) was a highly influential British pastor, theologian, and author known for his commitment to expository preaching (verse-by-verse from the Bible) and his dynamic, engaging preaching style.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Exodus 20:16

This commandment has a twofold intention. First, it guards the reputation of another; and, second, it closes the door of opportunity against unworthy men, who might seek to enter therein upon false testimony...

May it not be reverently said that the Perfect One is the supreme example of this truth? Looking at Him and His career from the purely human side, He lost His life through the sin against which this commandment is directed — that, namely, of false witness...

The commandment also has the effect of guarding the righteous from the evils resulting from receiving unworthy men upon false testimony. The man who willingly gives a rogue an entrance to some position on a false statement of character shares his roguery, and wrongs those upon whom the evil man is imposed...

Consider the subtle and far-reaching power of speech. The words of James occur naturally in this connection, "And the tongue is a fire; the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell." More harm has been wrought in human society by false testimony than can ever be stated or fully understood. Hence it is of great importance to carefully examine this ninth word of the Decalogue...

I. The Simple Intention of the Command

The words "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" demand truth in the statement, directly or indirectly, made by man, to man, concerning man. As the third commandment forbade the taking of the name of God in vain, and so conditioned the relation

of man to God in sincerity and truth; so the ninth reveals the fact that man in his relation to his fellow is to be actuated by the same principles, and proceed on the same lines. God ever deals with man upon the basis of His full and accurate knowledge of what man is. The Divine attitude towards man, and dealings with man, are not governed by the appearances which man desires to keep up before his fellows, nor by the opinion formed of him by his neighbors. No truer or more weighty words were ever spoken than those in which the Psalmist describes the Divine knowledge in Psalm 139:

*O Lord, You have searched me and known me.
You know my sitting down and my rising up;
You understand my thought afar off.*

Upon that intimate and absolute knowledge God bases His dealings with men. Such also is His purpose for man in his relation to his fellow. Human knowledge is of necessity limited, but limited knowledge is true so far as it goes, and the Divine requirement is that every man should sincerely speak of, and deal with, his brother man. The intercourse of men with each other is to depend upon actual facts of character, conduct, and capability. The whole social fabric is based upon testimony that one bears to another, and in order that that fabric may be established in truth and righteousness, such testimony is to be true...

II. How the Commandment May Be Violated

The first and simplest application of the commandment is to evidence given in courts of justice. The very name "justice" indicates the true function of such courts. They are tribunals for the execution of justice. Justice is based upon truth, and any false testimony borne is a violation of truth and produces a miscarriage of justice. For this reason, therefore, perjury is made a criminal offence, and rightly so,

because through perjury other forms of crime may go unpunished, and the innocent be made to suffer. To stay here, however, would be to rob the commandment of more than half its force. Because the majority of men may never have had to give evidence in a court of human law, and yet are daily in danger of breaking this word of the Divine law, they should carefully examine the numerous ways in which false witness may be borne.

1. Slander. The most bare and unblushing form of the sin is, of course, that of slander, the lie invented and distributed with malicious intention. Perhaps no form of injury done by man to man is more despicable than this. The person who makes use of it makes the highway man look like a gentleman, and the assassin almost kind. The highwayman robs of material things that have been gained, and may be replaced. The assassin ends the life by swift or sudden stroke, often with little pain; but the slanderer who invents a lie, and uses it, forms a weapon which takes away a reputation, and all the chances are against its ever being regained; and thus oftentimes causes untold and prolonged suffering to the innocent, while, in the majority of cases, he himself goes undiscovered and unpunished.

2. Tale-bearing. False witness is borne by tale-bearing, that is, by repetition of some report without careful investigation. To repeat a story, if it reflects upon the honor or character of any man, without the most careful inquiry, is to violate the commandment. This is certainly one of the most common forms in which it is done, and the tale-bearer perpetually excuses the action by saying that there was no intention to deceive, and the rumor was believed to be correct. This, however, is no justification. It is of the essence of wickedness to speak of a neighbor in such a way as is likely to work harm, unless the statements made are the statements of simple and actual fact. There are persons who seem to revel in this form of lawlessness, delighting in the very havoc wrought by the tales they tell.

3. Innuendo. False witness is also borne when a false impression is made upon the minds of certain persons about others, by a hint, a suggestion, or even the adroit asking of a question. Stigma has been cast upon many a fair reputation by such a question as, "Have you heard about Mr. _____?" ... Nothing further can be drawn from him but an unfavorable impression has been created, and the innuendo has had all the deceiving effect of false witness.

4. Silence. False witness, moreover, may also be borne by silence. When one man utters a calumny upon a second in the hearing of a third, if the third knows the statement to be a calumny, and for some personal reason or dislike, or it may be of fear, remains silent, that person is as guilty of the breach of the law as is the one uttering the calumny.

5. Imputation of motive. The imputation of motive is a prolific source of evil. Some deed done, or some gift bestowed, is called into question, not because they in themselves are wrong, but because it is hinted there was a reason for doing this other than that appearing—an ulterior, selfish, sordid motive. Some sentences that mark the methods of imputed motives are so commonly in use that to mention them is to reveal how prevalent is this form of the sin. "Ah, yes, he knows what he is doing."...

6. Flattery. Flattery is also a form of the same sin. To say to another man concerning him things which are not believed to be true, which, indeed, are known to be untrue, simply for the sake of pleasing him, and paying tribute to his vanity is to perjure the soul... In the same way, to utter unwarranted praise, to give a testimonial of character, or to recommend a man simply out of friendship for him, while he is known to be unworthy of the testimony borne, is to inflict injury upon the person to whom he is thus recommended.

Thus, it is seen how subtle a danger false witness is, how easily and almost imperceptibly, impressions of other people which are untrue may be created. There is no word of the Deca-

logue more often and unconsciously broken than this ninth commandment, and men need perpetually and persistently to pray: *Set a watch, O Lord, over my mouth* (Psalm 141:3).

III. Application to Present-Day Questions

The sin of bearing false witness is terribly prevalent among individuals today. It would be a startling revelation if records could be taken of all our conversations... The habit of talking of other people, discussing their affairs, is a most pernicious one, filled with peril to those who do it, and to those of whom they speak. It is largely indulged in through want of better occupation... It is often spoken of as a harmless vice, the only truth in that statement being that it is vice—harmless it by no means is...

There is also abroad today a great deal of false charity, which always works larger harm in the end. When out of pity for the present necessity of an incompetent man, he is recommended to a position for which he is not fitted, his final failure is made surer, and harm is wrought in the work committed to his trust. This is done in commercial, political, and religious life.

Nations and societies as well as individuals, may be guilty of the sin of false witness. It seems today the perpetual habit of certain sections of the press to impute motives to others, and for politicians to heap abuse on their opponents... It might be a good thing if many of our politicians and pressmen could for one half-hour divest themselves of their critical capacity... The air is full of suspicion, and while the old methods of persecution by imprisonment and torture have passed, martyrs are still being

made by the process of false witness borne, while all the while the thunder of the Divine fiat sounds over the age, *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor!*

And the Master's words are still found in His manifesto of the kingdom of heaven:

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you. And why behold thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, 'Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye'; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye. Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. (Matthew 7:1-5)

Every violation of truth is a desecration of the Decalogue, and there is no meaner form of rebellion against God and harming one's fellow man than that of creating impressions which are not true in the minds of others. He that breaks this command is at once a thief, a coward, and a liar—a liar, because false witness is the opposite of truth; a coward, because he who thus aims at the heart of his fellow-man gives him no chance of correction; a thief, for as Shakespeare says:

Who steals my purse steals trash; but he that takes from me my good name robs me of that which does not enrich him and which makes me poor indeed.

The corrective is, of course, in following Him Who is at once the embodiment of truth and incarnate love. Where He reigns the motive is love, and love ever expresses itself in truth.

What thought from G. Campbell Morgan's words stands out to you the most? Why?

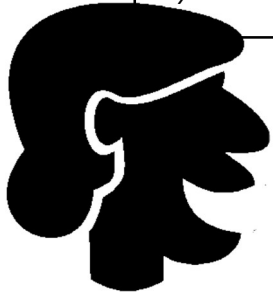
DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Reflect on what you have learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 20:16.

Evaluate your words. Place an “X” where you think you are on the following scales.

◆-----◆ <i>People question my words</i>	◆-----◆ <i>People trust my words</i>
◆-----◆ <i>I speak negatively of others</i>	◆-----◆ <i>I speak positively of others</i>
◆-----◆ <i>I exaggerate and stretch the truth</i>	◆-----◆ <i>I speak simply and honestly</i>
◆-----◆ <i>My words are full of gossip</i>	◆-----◆ <i>My words are full of grace</i>



When you are done placing an “X” on these scales, give this page to someone who knows you well and will be honest. Ask them to place a “X” where they would see your words.

Exodus 20:16 prohibits false, vain, or unnecessary words *against our neighbor*. When we slander someone, cast doubt on their character, share unverified information, judge motives, or attack someone out of our own pride, pleasure, or purposes then we have violated this command.

Instead, the New Testament gives the standard for *all* of the words that come out of our mouths.

*Let no harmful language come from your mouth,
only good words that are helpful in meeting the need,
words that will benefit those who hear them.* (Ephesians 4:29)

Does the Lord bring someone to your mind whom you have damaged with your words? If so, then confess this as sin to the Lord and seek to clean up any mess that your words have made.

Replace any “harmful language” with words that help, encourage, build up, and give grace.

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Proverbs 18:21

The thief doth send one only to the devil; the adulterer two; but the slanderer hurteth three; himself, the party to whom he speaks, and the party of whom he tells his tale.

John Boys (1571-1625)

Three essential rules when speaking of others are:

Is it true?

Is it kind?

Is it necessary?

Anonymous

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- Can you remember the first time that you told a lie to your parents, to your teacher, or to a friend? Why did you lie? What ended up happening?
- What word, verse, or thought stood to you from your study this week? Why?
- Read Proverbs 6:16-19. Why is lying such an abominable sin in God's eyes?
- None of us like to be lied to, yet we have all been guilty of lying to someone. Why do we tend to lie to others?
- G. Campbell Morgan lists six different ways we can violate the spirit of the ninth commandment. Which of these six ways convicts you the most? Why?
- Is there ever a time when lying may be permissible? If so, when?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of G. Campbell Morgan? If so, what?
- Ephesians 4:29 gives three standards for our words—is it true? is it kind? is it necessary? Which of these three standards for your words do you need to remember the most?

BEING CONTENT
Exodus 20:17-26

DAY ONE
OBSERVATION

The tenth commandment against coveting brings all the commandments back to the centrality of the heart. It is not just our actions that God cares about, but our hearts—what we think, what we desire, what we worship.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 20:17-26. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

“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.”

.....

¹⁸ Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. ¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

²⁰ And Moses said to the people, “Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.” ²¹ So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.

²² Then the Lord said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. ²³ You shall not make anything to be with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. ²⁴ An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you. ²⁵ And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. ²⁶ Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.’” (NKJV)

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

Unlike the previous four commandments, the tenth commandment does not simply say—*Do not covet*—which would imply that *all* desires are wrong. Instead, it defines the type of coveting or desiring that is wrong. **What does this commandment say that we should not covet or desire?**

What other terms can be used to describe this kind of strong desire for something that is not yours?



Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5)

What is covetousness equated with in Colossians 3:5? _____

How does covetousness lead to this sin?

What all did the people witness at Mount Sinai? (20:18-19) _____

What was their response to this experience? _____

What was God's purpose in this powerful display? (20:20) _____

In 20:22-26, God reiterates the priority of worshiping Him alone and doing so in the proper way.

What is forbidden? (20:23) _____

What kind of altar is to be made? (20:24-25) _____

Why should it not have steps? (20:26) _____

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Exodus 20:18-20 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

*All the people were seeing the thundering and the lightning,
and heard the sound of the horn,
and saw the mountain smoking—
and when the people saw it they trembled with fear and kept their distance.*

*They said to Moses,
“You speak to us and we will listen,
but do not let God speak with us, lest we die.”*

*Moses said to the people,
“Do not fear,
for God has come to test you,
that the fear of him may be before you so that you do not sin.” (NET)*

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 20" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 20:17 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word "false" and click on the Strong's number (H2530) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for "covet"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

Read the following OT passages which use this Hebrew word. Note that this word can be used in both a positive sense and a negative sense, depending on what is being desired.

*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was **to be desired** to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:5)*

*And Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I **coveted** them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath." (Joshua 7:20-21)*

*The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Lord are reliable
and altogether righteous.
They are more **desirable** than gold—
than an abundance of pure gold;
and sweeter than honey
dripping from a honeycomb. (Psalm 19:10-11)*

*Don't **lust** in your heart for her beauty
or let her captivate you with her eyelashes.
For a prostitute's fee is only a loaf of bread,
but the wife of another man goes after a precious life.
Can a man embrace fire
and his clothes not be burned? (Proverbs 6:25-27)*

*As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men.
With **great delight** I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. (Song of Songs 2:3)*

*Woe to those who dream up wickedness and prepare evil plans on their beds!
At morning light they accomplish it because the power is in their hands.
They covet fields and seize them; they also take houses.
They deprive a man of his home, a person of his inheritance. (Micah 2:1-2)*

Write down 3-5 things that you learn about strong desire or coveting from these passages.

When does a good desire turn into a sinful one? _____

The final instructions in Exodus 20:22-26 can seem out of place at first glance. But these words remind the people that worshiping God is not to be done according to their own whims. Instead, God demands not only that we worship Him alone but that we also worship Him properly.

Read the following excerpt from Douglas Stuart’s commentary on the book of Exodus.

Worship is the first and most basic response of any believer to his or her Savior and Lord. Altars were necessary for sacrifices, which were in turn necessary for worship. At this early point in the covenant, God gave the Israelites a brief overview of altar construction in anticipation of their need to worship Him properly. Now that He was becoming their covenant God, it was important that they be able to respond fully to Him in worship, not merely repeating the practices of the past or simply borrowing from pagans the concepts and procedures of worship and sacrifice. ...

The insistence on a simple altar relates to two factors: holiness and idolatry. Holiness is belonging to God; the altar must be His and His alone, a part of the means by which He accepts unholy people and makes them holy, through the transference of guilt from them to an animal. Therefore, the altar could not be something of which humans could take ownership because they shaped it and finished it with the same sorts of tools they might use for any mundane masonry project. Likewise, it must not be fancy enough to become like an idol. ...

Moreover, it could not even have steps. In ancient times most people did not wear what we would call underwear... There would always be the risk, at this early stage particularly, that a worshiper’s genital area would be “exposed” to the altar, insulting God. Instead, the altar would be built waist-high...upon which wood could be laid and fires built...

What stands out to you in Stuart’s explanation? Why? _____

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **G. Campbell Morgan's** book on *The Ten Commandments*. Morgan (1863-1945) was a highly influential British pastor, theologian, and author known for his commitment to expository preaching (verse-by-verse from the Bible) and his dynamic, engaging preaching style.

You shall not covet ... anything that is your neighbor's. Exodus 20:17

This tenth and last word of the Decalogue is in some sense radically different from those that have preceded it. It is the last requirement of the second table, and most distinctly refers primarily to man's relation to man. All the former commandments have forbidden overt acts. To disobey any of these is sooner or later to be detected by one's fellow-men. This final word utters its solemn warning against sin in the inner, hidden life. This commandment may be broken without the knowledge of any human being. Sooner or later this also will reveal itself in some overt act, and therein lies the importance of the commandment... The peculiar nature of this command, therefore, is that it passes below the externals of conduct to the hidden activities of the mind and heart and will, setting up the kingship of God, in all that strange and mystic region of human life. Thus, while the tenth commandment distinctly deals with human relationship, it sets such relationship in its right relation to Divine supremacy...

I. The Command

In examining the commandment itself it is well to notice carefully the word which is made use of to mark the sin. The actual word *covet*, in its original meaning, implies delight in some object. Because delight in anything necessarily means a sense of desire to possess, the word was used to mark that desire to possess, more than the delight which prompted the desire. In the repetition of the commandment in the Book of Deuteronomy (5:21), two words are used. The first word translated *covet* is the same as that already referred to in Exodus. The second word translated *desire* is a word meaning simply to wish for. The Apostle Paul in quoting the commandment uses a Greek word, which in its different forms in the NT is most frequently

translated *lust*. It is often rendered *desire*, and sometimes *covet*... These translations help to throw light upon the word. Its essential meaning is "to set the heart on," very literally, "to pant after."

The sin, therefore, suggested by the word is very evidently that of desire to possess something which belongs to another. Notice the sequence suggested by the very word itself. The eyes rest upon some object which commands the admiration of the beholder; something which is to that person delightful and to be desired. To desire to possess that object is to covet. There is, of course, an unnamed quantity in the circumstances addressed, something which is not wrong, but out of which the wrong may spring. That unnamed quantity is inability to obtain the object admired by lawful means. That condition may give rise to a desire to possess the object when not lawfully obtainable. That desire is the sin of coveting.

By way of illustration, a person may see a picture upon the walls of his friend's house, admire it, desire it and then purchase one like it. The desire in that case is not the sin of coveting, for it may be satisfied legitimately. Where the object admired is for any reason out of the reach of the one admiring, admiration merging into desire to possess breaks the commandment. Herein lies the searching and revealing power of this last word of the Decalogue. This desire for that which cannot lawfully be possessed is distinctly forbidden, and so this tenth word passes much deeper in its moral requirement than any that has preceded it. It sets up God's right over the realm of desire.

The whole force of the commandment lies in these words taken out of the commandment. *Thy neighbor's... thy neighbor's... his... his... his... his... thy neighbor's*. This is a sevenfold guarding of the interests of another. It is not

wrong to desire anything that in itself is right. It is wrong to desire any of these things when through any circumstances they are out of the reach of the one desiring.

This examination of the commandment in itself is enough to arrest the conscience and to bring man to say it is impossible to prevent desire following upon admiration; and this is indeed true, but this truth is the revelation of the fallen condition of humanity, and this is what the apostle meant when, in his great argument on the relation of the law to sin, he said, "I had not known sin except through the law; for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, *Thou shalt not covet*; but sin, finding occasion, wrought in me through the commandment all manner of coveting, for apart from the law sin is dead." [Rom. 7:7-8]

That sin is present in every life... Well will it be, if this searchlight of Divine requirement shall so astonish men as to drive them to Him Who alone is able to deal with the unexplored reaches of the nature, and then will they also be able to say, "The law hath been our tutor unto Christ." [Gal. 3:24]

The value and importance of the commandment will be gathered from a consideration of its far-reaching application.

1. Individual Life. Covetousness disturbs all the highest possibilities of life, and finally makes them impossible. These highest possibilities are indicated in the apostle's arrangement of the fruit of the Spirit: *Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control*. Covetousness will destroy the bloom and mar the beauty of all the fair cluster. Instead of love, there will be suspicion and hatred; instead of joy, sorrow, heartache; instead of peace, feverish unrest; instead of longsuffering, impatience; instead of kindness, cruelty; instead of goodness, miserliness; instead of faithfulness, infidelity; instead of meekness, arrogance; instead of self-control, selfishness...

2. Social Life. Out of disobedience to this command will spring sins that break every law

written upon the second Table of the Law... Criminal records will prove that in a great majority of cases, unholy desire was the inspiration of murder. No word need be written to demonstrate the fact that the look of lust precedes the act of adultery. Theft of every description is the offspring of desire to possess that which is unreachable by lawful means. The evil spirit that makes false witness possible is motivated far more often than perhaps appears by covetous aspiration. Thus the whole realm of human relation is disorganized and broken up by the dishonoring of the tenth commandment.

3. Divine Relationship. The sin of covetousness proves that the soul is out of harmony with God, and dissatisfied with Him. This sin issues, therefore, in the breaking of the commandments of the first Table of the Decalogue. It is for the accommodation of distorted human life that man has created other gods, themselves covetous and selfish. Unsatisfied desire, moreover, issues in the attempt to make some representation of God, for the easing of conscience which perpetually cries out for the authority of Deity. Profanity and blasphemy of all kinds result from the pain of a hunger that finds no satisfaction in the false gods thus set up. All profanity is the wail of lust. The desecration of the day of rest is due to the restlessness born of unholy desire. It will thus be seen how far-reaching and searching is this closing word of the Divine enunciation of morality. The first commandment and the last are closely linked, and all that lie between are conditioned within them. If a man have no God but Jehovah Elohim, then will he covet nothing, save what his God supplies. If a man covet anything that he may not lawfully obtain, it is because of hunger deeper than that born in the coveting, his hunger, namely, for the one true God.

II. The Teaching of the New Testament

Turning now to the NT, nothing can be clearer than its repetition and enforcement of the great principles of this commandment. The words of Jesus Himself admit of no misunderstanding. They were spoken in answer to a man who

asked the Master to satisfy his desire by compelling his brother to divide the inheritance with him. "Take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness, for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses" [Luke 12:15]. This statement He enforced by the parable of the rich fool, who, despite all his getting, found no present rest, and yet with acumen and concentration attempted to feed his soul with "goods," imagining that the spirit-life could be satisfied with eating, drinking, and merriment.

So also Paul ranks "the covetous man" with the "fornicator," the "unclean person," the "idolater," and declares that he has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (Eph. 5:4-5)

James, in his satire of the rich, that is, of men who have attempted to satisfy their life by possessing, and whose whole activity has been actuated by desire for gold, shows clearly the heinousness of the sin, and reveals how it issues in the breaking down of the social ideal. (5:1-6)

Peter tracks adultery to the same cause in his burning words, "Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin: enticing unsteadfast souls: having the heart exercised in covetousness." (2 Peter 2:14)

John declares in a comprehensive sentence the perishing nature and cause of sinful life, placing it in immediate antithesis to the permanence and cause of holy life. "The world passes away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:17)

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews, in his concluding portion, warns those to whom he writes against the same sin, putting covetousness and contentment into opposition, and showing how the first is rendered impossible, and the second made simple, to those who rest in the faithfulness and fellowship of God.

"Be free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have, for Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage

we say: The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?" (Heb. 13:5-6)

To return to the teaching of Jesus, a striking and forceful statement of the principle is contained in the remarkable words, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon" (Matt 6:25). He made this statement after warning His disciples against laying up treasures for themselves upon the earth. He followed it by declaring that they were not to be anxious concerning the things they should eat, or drink, or put on. They were rather *to seek first the kingdom of God*.

The sentence itself is most suggestive, putting into contrast the two camps in which men serve—God and Mammon. The inspiration and force of service in the camp of God is that of rest and satisfaction. The stimulus and spur of service in the camp of Mammon is that of covetousness. Man serves God in the quiet force of his rest in God. Man serves Mammon in the restless energy of his desire for Mammon.

Herein lies the most terrible indictment of covetousness. It is the fever which makes the eye glisten with a false luster, the cheek flush with deceitful color, the muscles twitch with unnatural activity, the nerves throb with restless desire. It is the service whose final wage is death. Wherever man desires anything, small or great, outside the possibility of righteousness, he is in that measure in the grip of a fever which must destroy him unless it be quenched.

III. The Application

Was there ever a day in which this great principle needed more forceful statement than today? Is it too much to say that covetousness lies at the root of all the evils that blight the world? The giant evils that sap the virtue of the people...all may be traced to the restless, unsatisfied heart of man in his covetousness for that which, possessed, does but breed new desire...

At the base of all social problems lies the same worm of discontent. The greed of the capitalist and the madness of the anarchist, the brutality of great corporations and the superb cruelty of

un-Christianized democracy, all arise from lust of possession. All the individual vices that are robbing the nations of their young men and maidens—drink, impurity, gambling—grow out of unsatisfied craving of the heart—covetousness. Humanity, away from God, covets, and no amount of getting proves to be gain...

Surely this last word of the Decalogue must bring every soul who honestly faces it into the place of conviction of sin, and to a sense of utter helplessness. It may be men have passed through the examination of all the foregoing commandments with some measure of self-respect still left, with some consciousness that they have not greatly sinned; but who at the last can stand in the light of this quick and powerful word, and claim to be guiltless?

It was Paul who after thirty years of Christian experience, reviewing his old life as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, could say, “as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless,” who yet had to say that when he faced this last word, *Thou shalt not covet*, he became conscious that sin wrought in him “all manner of coveting;”

and he found that the commandment which was unto life, was in him unto death. Very few dare look back upon the past and say even in the light of the earlier commandments conditioning the externals of life, that they have been *blameless*. But not one dare say they have not desired forbidden things.

The study of the Decalogue must therefore be closed with a confession of hopelessness. In it there is found the law of life, but not life. We are undone. It may be possible for men so to live as to escape the detection of their fellow men, but when God speaks to them in the secret stillness of the inner chamber of their being the arresting word, *Thou shalt not covet*; and when Jesus adds to that His word of exposition, “Every one that looks hath already in his heart,” they bow their heads in the dust, and say “We also have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” [Rom. 3:23]

Thus the commandments bring men into the light of Divine requirement, and draw from them the confession of guilt, and leave them waiting for the Deliverer. The commandments without the Cross utter a sentence of death.

What thought from G. Campbell Morgan’s words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Reflect on what you have learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 20:17-26.

It is our selfish, covetous desires that abide at the heart of sin. Consider the words of James.

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (4:1-3)

What does James say about our desires? How do they impact us? Our relationships? Our lives?

Pray David's prayer in Psalm 139:23. *Search me, O God, and know my heart!*

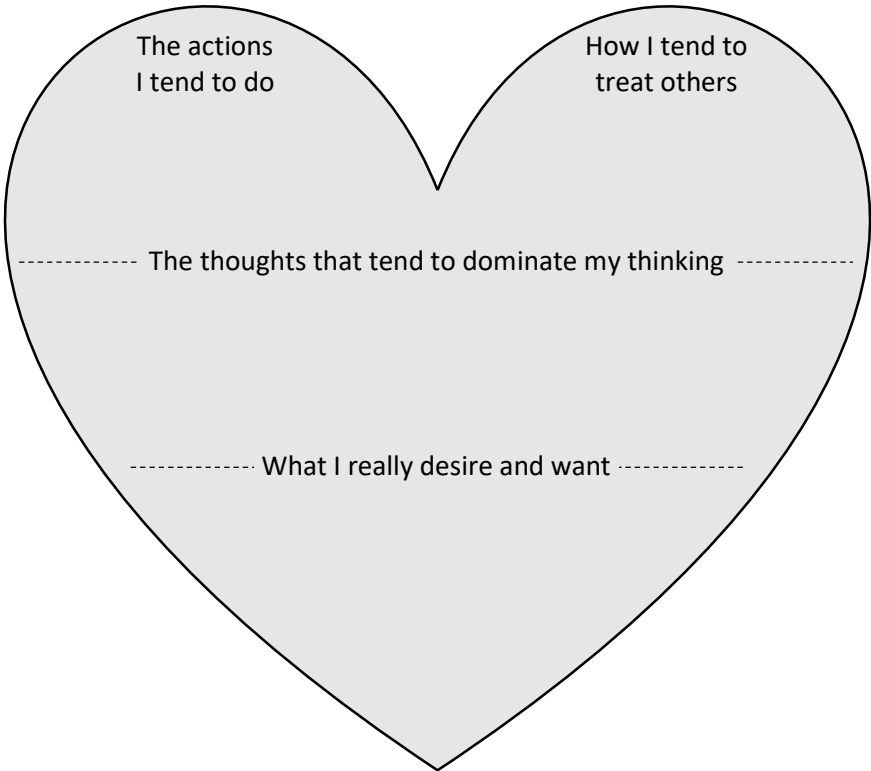
Examine the desires at the core of your heart.

What do you most desire and want in life?

What thoughts tend to dominate your mind?

How do these desires and thoughts impact your actions?

How do these desires and thoughts impact your relationships?



Read and reflect on Psalm 73.

*God is indeed good to Israel,
to the pure in heart.*

*But as for me, my feet almost slipped;
my steps nearly went astray.
For I envied the arrogant;
I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

*They have an easy time until they die,
and their bodies are well fed.
They are not in trouble like others;
they are not afflicted like most people.
Therefore, pride is their necklace,
and violence covers them like a garment.
Their eyes bulge out from fatness;
the imaginations of their hearts run wild.
They mock, and they speak maliciously;
they arrogantly threaten oppression.
They set their mouths against heaven,
and their tongues strut across the earth.*

*Therefore his people turn to them
and drink in their overflowing words.
The wicked say, "How can God know?
Does the Most High know everything?"*

*Look at them—the wicked!
They are always at ease,
and they increase their wealth.*

*Did I purify my heart
and wash my hands in innocence for nothing?
For I am afflicted all day long
and punished every morning.*

*If I had decided to say these things aloud,
I would have betrayed Your people.*

*When I tried to understand all this,
it seemed hopeless
until I entered God's sanctuary.
Then I understood their destiny.
Indeed, You put them in slippery places;
You make them fall into ruin.
How suddenly they become a desolation!
They come to an end, swept away by terrors.
Like one waking from a dream,
Lord, when arising, You will despise their image.*

*When I became embittered
and my innermost being was wounded,
I was stupid and didn't understand;
I was an unthinking animal toward You.
Yet I am always with You;
You hold my right hand.
You guide me with Your counsel,
and afterward You will take me up in glory.*

*Who do I have in heaven but You?
And I desire nothing on earth but You.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart,
my portion forever.*

*Those far from You will certainly perish;
You destroy all who are unfaithful to You.
But as for me, God's presence is my good.
I have made the Lord God my refuge,
so I can tell about all You do.*

Write down the thoughts that you have after reading this psalm.

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. I know 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 Christ who strengthens me.

Apostle Paul
Philippians 4:11-13

*You say, "If I had a little more, I should be very satisfied."
You make a mistake.
If you are not content with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled.*

Charles H. Spurgeon

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- Who is someone you know (or used to know) that seems to be content with life? What do you think is the secret to their contentment?
- What word, verse, or thought stood to you from your study this week? Why?
- What makes the tenth commandment different than the other commandments?
- When does a good desire become sinful?
- Why is covetousness called idolatry in Colossians 3:5?
- Why is God so concerned about how we worship Him?
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of G. Campbell Morgan? If so, what?
- Read Psalm 73 together. Can you identify with the psalmist's struggles? What eventually helps him find contentment and peace in his life?
- Share three things that you are thankful for today. Pray together, giving thanks to God!

OBEYING THE COVENANT

Exodus 21:1-23:33

Exodus 21-23 is called the “Book of the Covenant” or the “Covenant Code.” It is a collection of both **casuistic law** (i.e., case law, *if... then...*) and **apodictic law** (i.e., absolute commands).

At first glance, these chapters seem to be randomly put together but there is an overall structure.

- A Obeying and Worshiping God Alone (20:22-26)**
 - B Laws Dealing with Human Relationships (21:1-27)
 - C Laws Dealing with Property and Restitution (21:28-22:17)
 - D Abominations in the Land (22:18-20)**
 - C Laws Dealing with the Poor and Disadvantaged (22:21-23:9)
 - B Laws Dealings with Relationship with God (23:10-19)
- A Obeying and Worshiping God and His Messenger Alone (23:20-33)**

Many people skip over these laws or are somewhat embarrassed by them. They seem to be “archaic” and, at times, even cruel or unjust. For instance, the appearance of the word “slave” or “servant” immediately conjures up images of chattel slavery and the North American slave trade. But these laws are a stark contrast from the ancient world. Even the famed **Code of Hammurabi** (~1750 BC) does not measure up to the enduring principles behind these laws. These principles are almost second nature to us now, but that is because our own law system is built upon many of the principles found in Exodus 21-23. In some sense, we are like the fruit on the end of branch looking down at the roots in the dirt and speaking arrogantly against them, as if we got to this point on our own. Consider some of the common characteristics of ancient law codes.

1. **Privileges of the Upper Class.** All ancient law codes assume a threefold stratification of society into the upper-class nobility, the lower-class commoners, and the bottom-class, slave population. Ancient laws were designed to favor the upper class and preserve their power. People were not seen as equals before the law.
2. **Slaves as Property with No Rights.** The Hebrew term, *ebed*, is used to describe all those who work for another person. It could be translated as “slave,” “servant,” or even “worker.” In some cases, it is not much different than our employer-employee relationship. The question is not whether someone serves another person but under what conditions do they serve. In the ancient world, slaves were seen only as property with no rights to “days off,” no legal protections from injury, and few opportunities for freedom. The Israelites’ situation in Egypt is a prime example of slavery based on ethnicity, lifelong servitude, oppression of the weak, and total subjugation.
3. **Property Is Supreme.** Ancient law codes rarely deal with the sanctity of life. “Human life is cheap, but property is highly valued” (Sarna). Thus, the death penalty was imposed when property was stolen from the upper-class but there is rarely any mention of the crime of murder. In such cases, it was assumed that “blood vengeance” would take place by the family wronged, regardless of whether the person’s death was intentional or not. In the case of an ox goring someone to death (a common situation addressed in ancient law codes), the penalty was simply a fine regardless of whether the owner had been negligent. Only the economic side of things was considered.

4. **Motive Is Not Considered.** The ancient law codes had no distinctions for intentional or unintentional crimes. They had no consideration whether an owner of a goring ox was negligent or not. The ancient laws only dealt with the end result. They did not consider intentions or motives.
5. **Brutal Punishments.** Most ancient law codes prescribed excessive punishment and bodily mutilation for offenses, particularly against the upper class. Such punishments included “sixty blows with an ox-hide”; amputations of hands, tongues, eyes, ears, noses, testicles, and breasts; having one’s mouth “scoured with a quart of salt”; having hot tar poured on one’s head; and being dragged through fields; or even being drowned for cheating a person on the cost of beer. Though the *lex talionis* (i.e., “eye for an eye”) principle sounds harsh to our ears, it is actually a blessing since it eliminates excessive punishment. The punishment must fit the crime. In ancient Israel, *lex talionis* was not instituted literally with bodily mutilation but as a principle only.
6. **Vicarious Punishments.** Another common aspect of ancient law codes was that someone besides the guilty party often suffered the punishment. For instance, a person who rapes another person must have someone in their own family raped as punishment. If a person kills a woman, then a woman in the guilty person’s household must be put to death in their place.
7. **Multiple Punishments.** Ancient law codes frequently stipulated multiple punishments for certain crimes. Thus, a guilty person could be beaten, then mutilated or castrated, then made to pay a fine. And in cases of the death penalty, the person was often publicly humiliated and beaten first.
8. **No Concern for the Poor and Disadvantaged.** Ancient law codes were always slanted toward the protection of the upper class. Those in lower social classes were not given the same protections. Though the Code of Hammurabi is often cited as an example of concern for the disadvantaged, there is no evidence that this concern for the poor was ever actually implemented in actual practice. It seems that Hammurabi wanted to convince the gods that he was a good, just king so he wrote out what his desire was, not what he (or the judges under him) actually practiced.
9. **The King Has All Authority.** In the ancient world, the king was the law. Hammurabi could write a law code but how he implemented it was up to him. In Egypt, there were no law codes at all. The Pharaoh made the rules as he saw fit. Whatever laws that the king created were imposed on the people. They had no say in the process. There was no communication of the laws beforehand. There was no opportunity for the people to accept or reject the laws for themselves.

—Based on material in Sarna’s *Exploring Exodus* and Stuart’s *New American Commentary on Exodus*

Keep these things in mind as you read Exodus 21-23. Note the differences between the laws given to the people of Israel and the laws that were common in all the other cultures around them.

Since the material in Exodus 21-23 is different than many other sections of Scripture, the Bible study this week will be different as well. Instead of the typical five-day breakdown into Observation-Meditation-Interpretation-Devotion-Application, this week’s Bible study will focus on one section of Exodus 21-23 each day.

Read a portion of Exodus 21-23 each day and answer the questions that follow. The New English Translation (NET) is used since it seems to capture the nuance of these chapters the best. You can find this translation at netbible.org with explanatory notes provided.

DAY ONE
EXODUS 21:1-27

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 21:1-27 today. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

“These are the ordinances that you will set before them:

²“If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years, but in the seventh year he will go out free without paying anything. ³If he came in by himself he will go out by himself; if he had a wife when he came in, then his wife will go out with him. ⁴If his master gave him a wife, and she bore sons or daughters, the wife and the children will belong to her master, and he will go out by himself. ⁵But if the servant should declare, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ ⁶then his master must bring him to the judges, and he will bring him to the door or the doorpost, and his master will pierce his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him forever.

⁷“If a man sells his daughter as a female servant, she will not go out as the male servants do. ⁸If she does not please her master, who has designated her for himself, then he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to a foreign nation, because he has dealt deceitfully with her. ⁹If he designated her for his son, then he will deal with her according to the customary rights of daughters. ¹⁰If he takes another wife, he must not diminish the first one’s food, her clothing, or her marital rights. ¹¹If he does not provide her with these three things, then she will go out free, without paying money.

¹² “Whoever strikes someone so that he dies must surely be put to death. ¹³But if he does not do it with premeditation, but it happens by accident, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee. ¹⁴But if a man willfully attacks his neighbor to kill him cunningly, you will take him even from my altar that he may die.

¹⁵ “Whoever strikes his father or his mother must surely be put to death.

¹⁶ “Whoever kidnaps someone and sells him, or is caught still holding him, must surely be put to death.

¹⁷ “Whoever treats his father or his mother disgracefully must surely be put to death.

¹⁸ “If men fight, and one strikes his neighbor with a stone or with his fist and he does not die, but must remain in bed, ¹⁹and then if he gets up and walks about outside on his staff, then the one who struck him is innocent, except he must pay for the injured person’s loss of time and see to it that he is fully healed.

²⁰ “If a man strikes his male servant or his female servant with a staff so that he or she dies as a result of the blow, he will surely be punished. ²¹However, if the injured servant survives one or two days, the owner will not be punished, for he has suffered the loss.

²²“If men fight and hit a pregnant woman and her child is born prematurely, but there is no serious injury, the one who hit her will surely be punished in accordance with what the woman’s husband demands of him, and he will pay what the court decides. ²³ But if there is serious injury, then you will give a life for a life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

²⁶“If a man strikes the eye of his male servant or his female servant so that he destroys it, he will let the servant go free as compensation for the eye. ²⁷ If he knocks out the tooth of his male servant or his female servant, he will let the servant go free as compensation for the tooth.

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

What differences do you see in these laws versus the ancient law codes?

Note the “bookends” of this passage—each dealing with a servant going free (21:2-6; 21:26-27). **See if you can outline this passage using a chiasmic structure.** The main sections are provided.

A Servants Go Free after Six Years of Service (21:2-6)

B _____ (21:7-11)

C _____ (21:12-14)

D _____ (21:15)

E _____ (21:16)

D _____ (21:17)

C _____ (21:18-21)

B _____ (21:22-25)

A Servants Go Free if They Suffer Any Ongoing Injury (21:26-27)

Note the center of this chiastic structure. Why do you think this was such a central law?

Use blueletterbible.org to look up any words in this passage that you want to better understand. A good word to look up is the Hebrew word for “kidnap” in Exodus 21:16. Note how this word is used elsewhere in the book of Exodus. Write any thoughts that you have in the space below.

DAY TWO

EX 21:28-22:17

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 21:28-22:17 today. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

²⁸ “If an ox gores a man or a woman so that either dies, then the ox must surely be stoned and its flesh must not be eaten, but the owner of the ox will be acquitted. ²⁹ But if the ox had the habit of goring, and its owner was warned but he did not take the necessary precautions, and then it killed a man or a woman, the ox must be stoned and the man must be put to death. ³⁰ If a ransom is set for him, then he must pay the redemption for his life according to whatever amount was set for him. ³¹ If the ox gores a son or a daughter, the owner will be dealt with according to this rule. ³² If the ox gores a male servant or a female servant, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver, and the ox must be stoned.

³³ “If a man opens a pit or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it and an ox or a donkey falls into it, ³⁴ the owner of the pit must repay the loss. He must give money to its owner, and the dead animal will become his. ³⁵ If the ox of one man injures the ox of his neighbor so that it dies, then they will sell the live ox and divide its proceeds, and they will also divide the dead ox. ³⁶ Or if it is known that the ox had the habit of goring, and its owner did not take the necessary precautions, he must surely pay ox for ox, and the dead animal will become his.

22 “If a man steals an ox or a sheep and kills it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox, and four sheep for the one sheep. ² “If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no blood guilt for him. ³ If the sun has risen on him, then there is blood guilt for him. A thief must surely make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he will be sold for his theft. ⁴ If the stolen item should in fact be found alive in his possession, whether it be an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he must pay back double.

⁵“If a man grazes his livestock in a field or a vineyard and he lets the livestock loose and they graze in the field of another man, he must make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard. ⁶“If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or standing grain or the whole field is consumed, the one who started the fire must surely make restitution.

⁷“If a man gives his neighbor money or articles for safekeeping and it is stolen from the man’s house, if the thief is caught, he must repay double. ⁸ If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house will be brought before the judges to see whether he has laid his hand on his neighbor’s goods. ⁹ In all cases of illegal possessions, whether for an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any kind of lost item, about which someone says ‘This belongs to me,’ the matter of the two of them will come before the judges, and the one whom the judges declare guilty must repay double to his neighbor. ¹⁰ If a man gives his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep, and it dies or is injured or is carried away without anyone seeing it, ¹¹ then there will be an oath to the Lord between the two of them, that he has not laid his hand on his neighbor’s goods, and its owner will accept this, and he will not have to pay. ¹² But if it was stolen from him, he will pay its owner. ¹³ If it is torn in pieces, then he will bring it for evidence, and he will not have to pay for what was torn.

¹⁴“If a man borrows an animal from his neighbor and it is hurt or dies when its owner was not with it, the man who borrowed it will surely pay. ¹⁵ If its owner was with it, he will not have to pay; if it was hired, what was paid for the hire covers it.

¹⁶“If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged and goes to bed with her, he must surely pay the marriage price for her to be his wife. ¹⁷ If her father refuses to give her to him, he must pay money for the bride price of virgins.”

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

What differences do you see in these laws versus the ancient law codes?

This section of the Book of the Covenant also has a structure to it. There seems to be two main situations dealt with in this section—with three scenarios under each section.

- I Property Laws—One’s Property Causing Damage or Being Damaged (21:28-22:6)**
 - A Cases of Negligence—Dangerous or Damaged Animals (21:28-36)
 - B Cases of Theft—Stealing Property and Animals (22:1-4)
 - C Cases of Property Damage—Restitution for Damages (22:5-6)

- II Protection Laws—One’s Valuables Being Safeguarded (22:7-17)**
 - A Cases of Valuables Being Lost or Stolen (22:7-13)
 - B Cases of Valuables Being Borrowed (22:14-15)
 - C Cases of a Daughter Being Seduced by a Man (thus the man would be circumventing marriage customs and the paying of the bridal price) (22:16-17)

Most of this section makes sense to us. We can see some parallels to our own property laws. The paying of a “bridal price,” however, is unusual to us. Use blueletterbible.org to look up the Hebrew word for “dowry” (KJV) in Exodus 22:17. Write what you learn about this word below.

DAY THREE
EX 22:18-23:9

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 22:18-23:9 today. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

- ¹⁸ “You must not allow a sorceress to live.
- ¹⁹ “Whoever has sexual relations with a beast must surely be put to death.
- ²⁰ “Whoever sacrifices to a god other than the Lord alone must be utterly destroyed.
- ²¹ “You must not wrong a resident foreigner nor oppress him, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.
- ²² “You must not afflict any widow or orphan. ²³ If you afflict them in any way and they cry to me, I will surely hear their cry, ²⁴ and my anger will burn and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives will be widows and your children will be fatherless.
- ²⁵ “If you lend money to any of my people who are needy among you, do not be like a moneylender to him; do not charge him interest. ²⁶ If you do take the garment of your neighbor in pledge, you must return it to him by the time the sun goes down, ²⁷ for it is his only covering—it is his garment for his body. What else can he sleep in? And when he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am gracious.
- ²⁸ “You must not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.

²⁹“Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats. You must give me the firstborn of your sons. ³⁰ You must also do this for your oxen and for your sheep; seven days they may remain with their mothers, but give them to me on the eighth day.

³¹ “You will be holy people to me; you must not eat any meat torn by animals in the field. You must throw it to the dogs.

23 “You must not give a false report. Do not make common cause with the wicked to be a malicious witness.

²“You must not follow a crowd in doing evil things; in a lawsuit you must not offer testimony that agrees with a crowd so as to pervert justice, ³ and you must not show partiality to a poor man in his lawsuit.

⁴“If you encounter your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering off, you must by all means return it to him. ⁵ If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen under its load, you must not ignore him, but be sure to help him with it.

⁶“You must not turn away justice for your poor people in their lawsuits. ⁷ Keep your distance from a false charge—do not kill the innocent and the righteous, for I will not justify the wicked.

⁸“You must not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and subverts the words of the righteous.

⁹“You must not oppress a resident foreigner, since you know the life of a foreigner, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

What differences do you see in these laws versus the ancient law codes?

Beginning with Exodus 22:18, there is a shift from casuistic law (case law) to apodictic law (absolute commands). These laws highlight the moral values that are to underpin Israelite society. This section begins with three activities that are considered abominations in the eyes of God.

What three abominations are highlighted in Exodus 22:18-20?

1. _____ (22:18).
2. _____ (22:19).
3. _____ (22:20).

Why do you think these three acts are highlighted as particularly detrimental and destructive?

The rest of this section deals with protecting the poor and vulnerable in society. Use a highlighter or colored pencil and highlight the words “foreigner,” “widow,” “orphan,” “needy,” and “poor.”

In general, how are the poor and vulnerable in a society to be treated according to God’s law?

Why should Israel treat the vulnerable in this way? (22:21; 23:9) _____

At the same time, compassion should not subvert true justice. **What does Exodus 23:3 say?**

How should we treat authority? (22:28) _____

How should we treat our enemies or those who hate us? (23:4-5) _____

How should we treat truth? (23:1-8) _____

What should we do if popular opinion pressures us into doing what is wrong? (23:2)

DAY FOUR
EX 23:10-19

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 23:10-19 today. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

¹⁰ “For six years you are to sow your land and gather in its produce. ¹¹ But in the seventh year you must let it lie fallow and leave it alone so that the poor of your people may eat, and what they leave any animal in the field may eat; you must do likewise with your vineyard and your olive grove.

¹² For six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you must cease, in order that your ox and your donkey may rest and that your female servant’s son and the resident foreigner may refresh themselves.”

¹³ “Pay attention to do everything I have told you, and do not even mention the names of other gods—do not let them be heard on your lips.”

¹⁴ “Three times in the year you must make a pilgrim feast to me. ¹⁵ You are to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; seven days you must eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you, at the appointed time of the month of Abib, for at that time you came out of Egypt. No one may appear before me empty-handed. ¹⁶ “You are also to observe the Feast of Harvest, the first-fruits of your labors that you have sown in the field, and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year when you have gathered in your harvest out of the field. ¹⁷ At three times in the year all your males will appear before the Sovereign Lord.”

¹⁸ “You must not offer the blood of my sacrifice with bread containing yeast; the fat of my festal sacrifice must not remain until morning.

¹⁹ The first of the firstfruits of your soil you must bring to the house of the Lord your God.”

“You must not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.”

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

What differences do you see in these laws versus the ancient law codes?

What is to rest every seventh year? (23:10-11) _____

Who is to rest every seventh day? (23:12) _____

What is everyone to do three times per year? (23:14-17) _____

If Israel followed these stipulations, then regular rest would be part of their week, their year, and every seventh year. God wanted His people to enjoy serving Him!

Use blueletterbible.org to look up the Hebrew word for “refreshed” (H5314) in Exodus 23:12.

What is the Hebrew word for “refreshed”? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

Are you setting aside regular time to rest and be refreshed in the Lord? Take time today to take a deep breath, focus on the goodness of God, and rejoice in all that He has done in your life.

DAY FIVE
EX 23:20-33

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 23:20-33 today. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

²⁰ “I am going to send an angel before you to protect you as you journey and to bring you into the place that I have prepared. ²¹ Take heed because of him, and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my Name is in him. ²² But if you diligently obey him and do all that I command, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and I will be an adversary to your adversaries. ²³ For my angel will go before you and bring you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I will destroy them completely.

²⁴ “You must not bow down to their gods; you must not serve them or do according to their practices. Instead, you must completely overthrow them and smash their standing stones to pieces. ²⁵ You must serve the Lord your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will remove sickness from your midst. ²⁶ No woman will miscarry her young or be barren in your land. I will fulfill the number of your days.

²⁷ “I will send my terror before you, and I will alarm all the people whom you encounter; I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. ²⁸ I will send hornets before you that will drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite before you. ²⁹ I will not drive

them out before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild animals multiply against you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you become fruitful and inherit the land. ³¹ I will set your boundaries from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River, for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you.

³² “You must make no covenant with them or with their gods. ³³ They must not live in your land, lest they make you sin against me, for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

What thought or verse stands out to you in these passages? Why?

God ends His laws with His promises. The people are to obey God for His glory and their good.

What will God’s “angel” do for Israel? (23:20, 23) _____

How are they to respond to him? (23:21-22) _____

God gives fourteen promises to Israel. Highlight “I will” and “he will” (23:25) in this passage.

1. I will _____ (23:22)
2. I will _____ (23:22)
3. I will _____ (23:23)
4. He/I will _____ (23:25)
5. I will _____ (23:25)
6. I will _____ (23:26)
7. I will _____ (23:27)
8. I will _____ (23:27)
9. I will _____ (23:27)
10. I will _____ (23:28)
11. I will _____ (23:29)
12. I will _____ (23:30)
13. I will _____ (23:31)
14. I will _____ (23:31)

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

The Torah knows nothing of social stratification in matters of adjudication. It dispenses equal justice for all, irrespective of class distinction.

Nahum Sarna

In much of the ancient world... virtually no distinction was made between purposeful and accidental homicide. In the logic of the vengeance system, the causing of a death required the parallel causing of a death to "satisfy" the grievance and make things equal.

Douglas Stuart

Compulsory, lifelong servanthood is prohibited within Israel.

J. Alec Motyer

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- How have you approached Exodus 21-23 in the past? Did you skip over these chapters or read through them quickly? Were you somewhat embarrassed by them? How did this week's study impact your view of these chapters?
- What word, verse, or thought stood to you from your study this week? Why?
- In what ways do the laws in Exodus 21-23 counteract the common practices and laws found within the ancient world?
- How does Exodus 21-23 address the value of human life? How does it address motive and intent? How does it address authority? How does it address truth and justice?
- How was Israel supposed to treat the vulnerable and weak in their society? Why?
- No other ancient society addressed the importance of regular rest, particularly for servants, animals, and land. What does God's requirement for regular rest teach us?
- Who do you think God's "angel" or messenger is in this passage?
- In what practical ways can you apply Exodus 21-23 to your everyday life?

RATIFYING THE COVENANT

Exodus 24:1-18

DAY ONE
OBSERVATION

God visited His people, Israel, and entered into covenant with them. The Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant state the stipulations of the covenant. In Exodus 24, the covenant is formally ratified.

Ask God to speak to your heart as you read Exodus 24:1-18. Mark words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down your thoughts next to each verse or passage.

Now He said to Moses, “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. ² And Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him.”

³ So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.” ⁴ And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. ⁶ And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.” ⁸ And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.”

⁹ Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. ¹¹ But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.

¹² Then the Lord said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.”

¹³ So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. ¹⁴ And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them.” ¹⁵ Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.

¹⁶ Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷ The sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. ¹⁸ So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights. (NKJV)

What thought or verse stands out to you in Exodus 24:1-18? Why?

This passage represents the fifth of seven times that Moses ascends Mount Sinai.

1. Moses receives the promises of the Mosaic Covenant (19:3).
2. Moses brings back the word of the people to the Lord (19:8).
3. Moses receives additional warnings from the Lord (19:20).
4. Moses acts as the mediator of the people to receive God's laws (20:21).
5. **Moses continues further up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone (24:12-18).**
6. Moses intercedes to the Lord because of the sin of the people (33:31).
7. Moses returns to the Lord to receive the Ten Commandments a second time (34:4).

How do the people respond to God's covenant with them in the following verses?

19:8 _____

24:3 _____

24:7 _____

What two things are sprinkled with blood during the "cutting of this covenant"?

24:6 _____

24:8 _____

After the "cutting of the covenant" (in which animals are sacrificed and blood sprinkled), there is typically a covenant meal. **Who all participates in this particular covenant meal?** (24:1; 9-11)

The elders "saw the God of Israel." Either they saw God's glory in some kind of human form (pre-incarnate Christ?) or they saw some manifestation of God from underneath His feet.

How is this vision of God described? (24:10) _____

How does God appear to the rest of the people? (24:16-17) _____

How long is Moses at the top of Mt. Sinai? (24:18) _____

DAY TWO
MEDITATION

Quiet your heart and allow God to speak through His Word. Slowly read Exodus 24:9-11 several times. Reflect on each word. Meditate on them over and over until you memorize them.

Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky.

But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank. (NIV)

Write down the observations that you can make from this passage, sketch out any images or thoughts that you have, or simply rewrite the passage below giving emphasis to key words.

Offer the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer.

DAY THREE
INTERPRETATION

In interpretation, you are digging deeper into the passage in order to better understand its meaning. A word study on a key word and/or looking up parallel passages can help you in your understanding.

In the ancient world, when people made a binding covenant together, they would often cut an animal in half and walk together between the divided parts. This act basically said, “If I break this covenant, may what happened to this animal happen to me.” The covenant was sealed with blood. This is the practice described in Genesis 15 with God and Abraham.



The Lord said to him, “Take for me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.” So Abram took all these for him and then cut them in two and placed each half opposite the other... (Genesis 15:9-10a)

What was unique in Genesis 15 was that *only God* walked between the animals. God alone was obligating Himself to keep His covenant with Abraham. Thus, this covenant was unconditional.

*When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking firepot with a flaming torch passed between the animal parts. **That day the Lord made a covenant with Abram:** “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.” (15:17-21)*

In Exodus 24, God cuts a covenant with the entire nation of Israel. In this case, both parties of the covenant are sprinkled with blood—half of the blood is sprinkled on the altar and the other half is sprinkled on the people. Thus, this covenant is conditioned on the obedience of the people.

Read Hebrews 9:18-20. This is the New Testament description of this event in Exodus 24.

This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, “This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.”

What is necessary for putting a covenant into effect? _____

How many of the people of Israel were part of this covenant? _____

How many of the commands were they to keep? _____

What was sprinkled with blood? _____

Go to blueletterbible.org and type "Exodus 24" into the "Search the Bible" box. Click on Exodus 24:4 to bring up the verse in the Hebrew. Find the word "wrote" and click on the Strong's number (H3789) to bring up the Hebrew word, its definition, and its usage in the Old Testament.

What is the Hebrew word for "wrote"? _____ (Use the transliteration.)

How many times is it used in the OT? _____ (See KJV Translation Count.)

What is its definition? _____

In what book of the Bible is this word first used? _____ (See Search Results.)

What set Israel apart from all other ancient peoples was their development and commitment to the written word. Many scholars believe that the first alphabet in history was the Hebrew one. It was the Jews who made writing the central act of their culture and worship of God. God was not represented by an image or an idol but by His Word. Thus, every Jew was to learn the Word.

Read the following passages which use this Hebrew word. Mark key phrases as you read.

*The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandments that I have **written**, so that you may teach them."* (Exodus 24:12)

*After Moses finished **writing** in a book the words of this law from beginning to end, he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord: "Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. There it will remain as a witness against you."* (Deuteronomy 9:24-26)

*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is **written** in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.* (Joshua 1:8)

*Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were **written**, the days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them.* (Psalm 139:16)

*Let love and truth never leave you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart.
Then you will win favor and a good name
In the sight of God and man.* (Micah 2:1-2)

What stands out to you from these verses? _____

DAY FOUR
DEVOTION

Read the following excerpt from **Matthew Henry's Exposition of the Old Testament**. Matthew Henry (1662-1714) was a pastor, preacher, and author from Chester, England. He is best known for his exhaustive, six-volume, verse-by-verse commentary on the Scriptures. Charles Spurgeon stated that, "Every minister ought to read it entirely and carefully through once at least."

Exodus 24:1-8

Moses is directed to bring Aaron and his sons, and the seventy elders of Israel, that they might be witnesses of the glory of God, and that communion with him to which Moses was admitted; and that their testimony might confirm the people's faith. In this approach, they must all be very reverent: *Worship you afar off*, v. 1. Before they came near, they must worship. Thus, we must enter into God's gates with humble and solemn adorations, draw near as those that know our distance, and admire the condescension of God's grace in admitting us to draw near. Are great princes approached with the profound reverences of the body? And shall not the soul that draws near to God be bowed before him? They must none of them come so near as Moses, v. 2. They must come up to the Lord (and those that would approach to God must *ascend*), but Moses alone must come near, being therein a type of Christ, who, as the high priest, entered alone into the most holy place.

In the following verses, we have the solemn covenant made between God and Israel, and the exchanging of the ratifications; and a very solemn transaction it was...

I. Moses told the people the words of the Lord, v. 3. He did not lead them blindfold into the covenant, nor teach them a devotion that was the daughter of ignorance; but laid before them all the precepts, general and particular, in the foregoing chapters; and fairly put it to them whether they were willing to submit to these laws or not.

II. The people unanimously consented to the terms proposed, without reservation or exception: *All the words which the Lord hath said will we do*. They had before consented in general to be under God's government (19:8);

here they consent in particular to these laws now given. *O that there had been such a heart in them!* How well were it if people would but be always in the same good mind that sometimes they seem to be in! Many consent to the law, and yet do not live up to it; they have nothing to except against it, and yet will not persuade themselves to be ruled by it.

This is the tenor of the covenant, That, if they would observe the foregoing precepts, God would perform the foregoing promises. "Obey, and be happy." Here is the bargain made.

1. It was written in the book of the covenant: *Moses wrote the words of the Lord* (v. 4), that there might be no mistake; probably he had written them as God dictated them on the mount. As soon as ever God had separated to himself a peculiar people in the world, he governed them by a written word, as he has done ever since, and will do while the world stands... Moses, having engrossed the articles of agreement concluded upon between God and Israel, *read them in the audience of the people* (v. 7), that they might be perfectly apprised of the thing, and might try whether their second thoughts were the same with their first, upon the whole matter. And we may suppose they were so; for their words are the same with what they were (v. 3), but something stronger: *All that the Lord hath said we will do*; so they had said before, but now they add, *And will be obedient*; not only we will do what has been commanded, but in everything which shall further be ordained *we will be obedient*. "Bravely resolved! if they had but stuck to their resolution. See here that God's covenants and commands are so incontestably equitable in themselves, and so highly advantageous to us, that the more we think of them...the more reason we shall see to comply with them.

2. It was sealed by the blood of the covenant, that Israel might receive strong consolations from the ratifying of God's promises to them, and might lie under strong obligations from the ratifying of their promises to God. Thus has Infinite Wisdom devised means that we may be confirmed both in our faith and in our obedience, may be both encouraged in our duty and engaged to it. The covenant must be made by sacrifice (Ps. 50:5), because, since man has sinned, and forfeited his Creator's favor, there can be no fellowship by covenant till there be first friendship and atonement by sacrifice.

(1.) In preparation for the parties interchangeably putting their seals to this covenant, Moses builds an altar, to the honor of God, which was principally intended in all the altars that were built, and which was the first thing to be looked at in the covenant they were now to seal...

He erects twelve pillars, according to the number of the tribes. These were to represent the people, the other party to the covenant; and we may suppose that they were set up by the altar, and that Moses, as mediator, passed to and fro between them. Probably each tribe set up and knew its own pillar, and their elders stood by it.

He appointed sacrifices to be offered upon the altar, burnt-offerings and peace-offerings... We are not concerned to enquire who these young men were that were employed in offering these sacrifices; for Moses was himself the priest, and what they did was purely as his servants, by his order and appointment. No doubt they were men who by their bodily strength were qualified for the service, and by their station among the people were fittest for the honor.

(2.) Preparation being thus made, the ratifications were very solemnly exchanged. The blood of the sacrifice which the people offered was (part of it) sprinkled upon the altar, which signifies the people's dedicating themselves, their lives, and beings, to God, and to his honor. In the blood (which is the life) of the dead sacrifices all the Israelites were presented unto God as living sacrifices, Rom. 12:1.

The blood of the sacrifice which God had owned and accepted was (the remainder of it) sprinkled either upon the people themselves or upon the pillars that represented them, which signified God's graciously conferring his favor upon them and all the fruits of that favor...

This part of the ceremony was thus explained: *Behold the blood of the covenant* (v. 8) ...

Thus our Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant (of whom Moses was a type), having offered up himself a sacrifice upon the cross, that his blood might be indeed the blood of the covenant, sprinkled it upon the altar in his intercession (Heb. 9:12), and sprinkles it upon his church by his word and ordinances and the influences and operations of the Spirit of promise, by whom we are sealed. He himself seemed to allude to this solemnity when, in the institution of the Lord's supper, he said, *This cup is the New Testament* (or covenant) *in my blood*. Compare with this, Heb. 9:19-20.

Exodus 24:9-11

The people having, besides their submission to the ceremony of the sprinkling of blood, declared their well-pleas'dness in their God and his law, again and again, God here gives to their representatives some special tokens of his favor to them (for God meets him that rejoices in righteousness), and admits them nearer to him than they could have expected...

1. They saw the God of Israel (v. 10), that is, they had some glimpse of his glory, in light and fire, though they saw *no manner of similitude*, and his being *no man hath seen nor can see*, 1 Tim. 6:16. They saw the place where the God of Israel stood, something that came near a similitude, but was not; whatever they saw, it was certainly something of which no image nor picture could be made, and yet enough to satisfy them that God was with them of a truth. Nothing is described but that which was under his feet; for our conceptions of God are all below him, and fall infinitely short of being adequate. They saw not so much as God's feet; but at the bottom of the brightness, and as the

footstool or pedestal of it, they saw a most rich and splendid pavement, such as they never saw before nor after, as it had been of sapphires, azure or sky-colored. The heavens themselves are the pavement of God's palace, and his throne is above the firmament...

2. Upon the nobles (or elders) of Israel, he laid not his hand, v. 11. Though they were men, the dazzling splendor of his glory did not overwhelm them; but it was so moderated (Job 26:9), and they were so strengthened (Dan. 10:19), that they were able to bear it. Nay, though they were sinful men...yet he did not lay his punishing avenging hand upon them, as they feared he would. When we consider what a consuming fire God is, and what stubble we are before him, we shall have reason to say, in all our approaches to him, *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.* [Lam. 3:22]

3. They saw God, and did eat and drink. They had not only their lives preserved, but their vigor, courage, and comfort; it cast no damp upon their joy, but rather increased and elevated it. They *feasted upon the sacrifice*, before God, in token of their cheerful consent to the covenant now made, their grateful acceptance of the benefits of it, and their communion with God, in pursuance of that covenant. Thus, believers *eat and drink with Christ at his table*, Luke 22:30. Blessed are those that shall eat bread in the kingdom of our Father, and drink of the wine new there.

Exodus 24:12-18

The public ceremony of sealing the covenant being over, Moses is called up to receive further instructions, which we have in the following chapters.

I. He is called up into the mount, and there he remains six days at some distance. Orders are given him (v. 12): *Come up to the mount, and be there*, that is, "Expect to continue there for some considerable time." Those that would have communion with God must not only come to ordinances, but they must abide by them. Blessed are those that dwell in his house, not

that merely call there. "Come up, and *I will give thee a law, that thou mayest teach them.*"

Moses taught them nothing but what he had received from the Lord, and he received nothing from the Lord but what he taught them; for he was faithful both to God and Israel, and did neither add nor diminish, but kept close to his instructions. Having received these orders:

1. He appointed Aaron and Hur to be as lords-justices in his absence, to keep the peace and good order in the congregation, v. 14. The care of his government he would leave behind him when he went up into the mount, that he might not have that to distract his mind; and yet he would not leave the people as sheep having no shepherd, no, not even for a few days. Good princes find their government a constant care, and their people find it a constant blessing.

2. He took Joshua up with him into the mount, v. 13. Joshua was his minister, and it would be a satisfaction to him to have him with him as a companion, during the six days that he tarried in the mount, before God called to him. Joshua was to be his successor, and therefore thus he was honored before the people, above the rest of the elders, that they might afterwards the more readily take him for their governor; and thus he was prepared for service, by being trained up in communion with God. Joshua was a type of Christ, and Moses takes him with him into the mount, because without Jesus, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, there is no looking into the secrets of heaven, nor approaching the glorious presence of God.

3. A cloud covered the mount six days, a visible token of God's special presence there, for he so shows himself to us as at the same time to conceal himself from us. He lets us know so much as to assure us of his presence, power, and grace, but intimates to us that we cannot find him out to perfection. During these six days Moses stayed waiting upon the mountain for a call into the presence-chamber, v. 15, 16. God thus tried the patience of Moses,

and his obedience to that command: *Be there*. If Moses had been tired before the seventh day (as Saul was in 1 Sam. 13:8-9), and had said, *What should I wait for the Lord any longer?* he would have lost the honor of entering into the cloud; but communion with God is worth waiting for. And it is fit we should address ourselves to solemn ordinances with a solemn pause, taking time to compose ourselves.

*O God, my heart is fixed;
I will sing and give praise,
even with my inmost being.* (Psalm 108:1)

II. He is called up into a cloud on the seventh day, probably on the sabbath day, v. 16.

1. Now, the thick cloud opened in the sight of all Israel, and the glory of the Lord broke forth *like devouring fire*, v. 17. God, even our God, is a consuming fire, and so he was pleased to manifest himself in the giving of the law, that, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we may be persuaded to obey, and may by them be prepared for the comforts of the gospel, and that the *grace and truth* which come by Jesus Christ may be the more acceptable.

2. The entrance of Moses into the cloud was very wonderful: *Moses went into the midst of the cloud*, v. 18. It was an extraordinary presence of mind which the grace of God furnished him with by his six day's preparation, else he would not have ventured into the cloud, especi-

ally when it broke out in devouring fire. Moses was sure that he who called him would protect him; and even those glorious attributes of God which are most terrible to the wicked the saints with a humble reverence rejoice in. He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly, is able to *dwell even with this devouring fire*, as we are told, Isa. 33:14-15. There are persons and works that will abide the fire, 1 Co. 3:12, etc., and some that will have confidence before God.

3. His continuance in the cloud was no less wonderful; he was there *forty days and forty nights*. It should seem, the six days (v. 16) were not part of the forty; for, during those six days, Moses was with Joshua, who did eat of the manna, and drink of the brook, mentioned, in Deut. 9:21, and while they were together it is probable that Moses did eat and drink with him; but when Moses was called *into the midst of the cloud* he left Joshua without, who continued to eat and drink daily while he waited for Moses's return, but thenceforward Moses fasted.

Doubtless God could have said what he had now to say to Moses in one day, but, for the greater solemnity of the thing, he kept him with him in the mount *forty days and forty nights*. We are hereby taught to spend much time in communion with God, and to think that time best spent which is so spent. Those that would get the knowledge of God's will must meditate *thereon day and night*.

What thought from Matthew Henry's words stands out to you the most? Why?

DAY FIVE
APPLICATION

Reflect on what you have learned from your Bible study this past week.

Write one truth that impacted you from your study of Exodus 24:1-18.

Though the Mosaic Covenant was made specifically with Israel, its implications impact us all. The Law reveals the absolute righteousness of God. The Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant call for us to worship God alone, worship Him properly, honor His name, rest in Him completely, honor all authority, honor all human life, honor the purity and sanctity of sex and marriage, honor the property of others, always speak truth, and always be content in what we have, never coveting that which is not ours. The Law confronts our heart, our words, our actions, our motives, our desires, our relationships, and our treatment of all other people around us.

And, just like Israel, we all fail to meet the righteous standard of God. We all disobey His law. We all break His covenant. And to break one part of God’s covenant is to be guilty of breaking it all.

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. (James 2:8-10)

Read and reflect on Paul’s words in Romans 7:7-25. Paul grew up as a Pharisee. He desired to follow all of God’s law perfectly...and, from an outward standpoint (at least compared to others that he knew), Paul thought he was doing pretty good. But when Paul looked honestly at his own heart, he knew that he failed...over and over again. The law not only confronts our outward actions; it also confronts our desires and motives at the level of the heart.

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! Certainly, I would not have known sin except through the law. For indeed I would not have known what it means to desire something belonging to someone else if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of wrong desires. For apart from the law, sin is dead.⁹ And I was once alive apart from the law, but with the coming of the commandment sin became alive¹⁰ and I died. So I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life brought death!¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it I died.¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good.

Which commandment convicted Paul the most? _____

Have you ever been told not to do something over and over...and found that the desire to do this very thing somehow increases? This is what Paul is realizing in these verses. Now, keep reading...

¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? Absolutely not! But sin, so that it would be shown to be sin, produced death in me through what is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful. ¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual—but I am unspiritual, sold into slavery to sin. ¹⁵ For I don't understand what I am doing. For I do not do what I want—instead, I do what I hate. ¹⁶ But if I do what I don't want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ But now it is no longer me doing it, but sin that lives in me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For I want to do the good, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but I do the very evil I do not want! ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer me doing it but sin that lives in me.

How does Paul describe God's law? _____

How does Paul describe himself? _____

Complete the following statements that Paul makes in these verses:

I don't understand _____ (7:15a).

For I do not do _____ (7:15b).

Instead, I do what _____ (7:15c).

For I want to do the good, but _____ (7:18).

What is something in your life that you know you *shouldn't* do, but you find you do it anyways?

What is something in your life that you know you *should* do, but you just struggle to do it?

Now finish reading Paul's words in Romans 7.

²¹ So, I find the law that when I want to do good, evil is present with me. ²² For I delight in the law of God in my inner being. ²³ But I see a different law in my members waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that is in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

What conclusion does Paul reach about himself? _____

What question does he ask? _____

What answer does he come to? _____

Have you reached this conclusion in your own life? Have you recognized your own struggle with sin? Have you recognized that you have violated the righteous standards of God? Have you admitted your own inability to follow God’s law and to please Him in your own flesh?

- Yes, I have.
- No, I am still convinced of my own righteousness.
- I don’t know.

If, like Paul, you have reached the point where you recognize your sin and your inability to obey God’s law completely—in heart, mind, words, and actions—then have you also reached the point where you recognize that your only hope is in the grace of God shown to you in Jesus Christ?

- Yes, I have.
- No, I still think I am okay without Jesus.
- No, I still struggle to understand.

If you have not trusted in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, but you now recognize your need to receive His grace, then trust in Him now! When He died on the cross and shed His own blood, He took your place. He received your sin, your death, and your punishment, so that you could receive His grace, His life, and His righteousness.

Pray a prayer similar to this one in your heart and with your lips.

God, I know that I am a sinner. I know I have violated Your law. I know that I deserve eternal punishment. But thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to die for my sins, to die in my place. I trust Him now as my personal Savior. Come into my life and change me from the inside out for Your glory. Amen.

It is not the words of the prayer that save you but the faith in Jesus expressed in the prayer.

If you know Jesus as your Savior, then read Paul’s words at the beginning of Romans 8.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2)

Say these words out loud and then write out a prayer of praise to God below.

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

The law may discover sin and convince of sin, but it cannot conquer and subdue sin. It discovers the defilement, but will not wash it off. It makes a man weary and heavy laden, burdens him with his sin; yet it yields no help towards the shaking off of that burden. This is only found in Christ.

Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

Paul's problem isn't desire—he wants to do what is right. His problem isn't knowledge—he knows what the right thing is. His problem is lack of power—how to perform what is good. He lacks power because the law gives no power.

Kenneth Wuest (1893-1961)

While the Law defines righteousness, only grace delivers it. The Law was never intended to be a means of obtaining grace; it was given to demonstrate to men that grace was desperately needed.

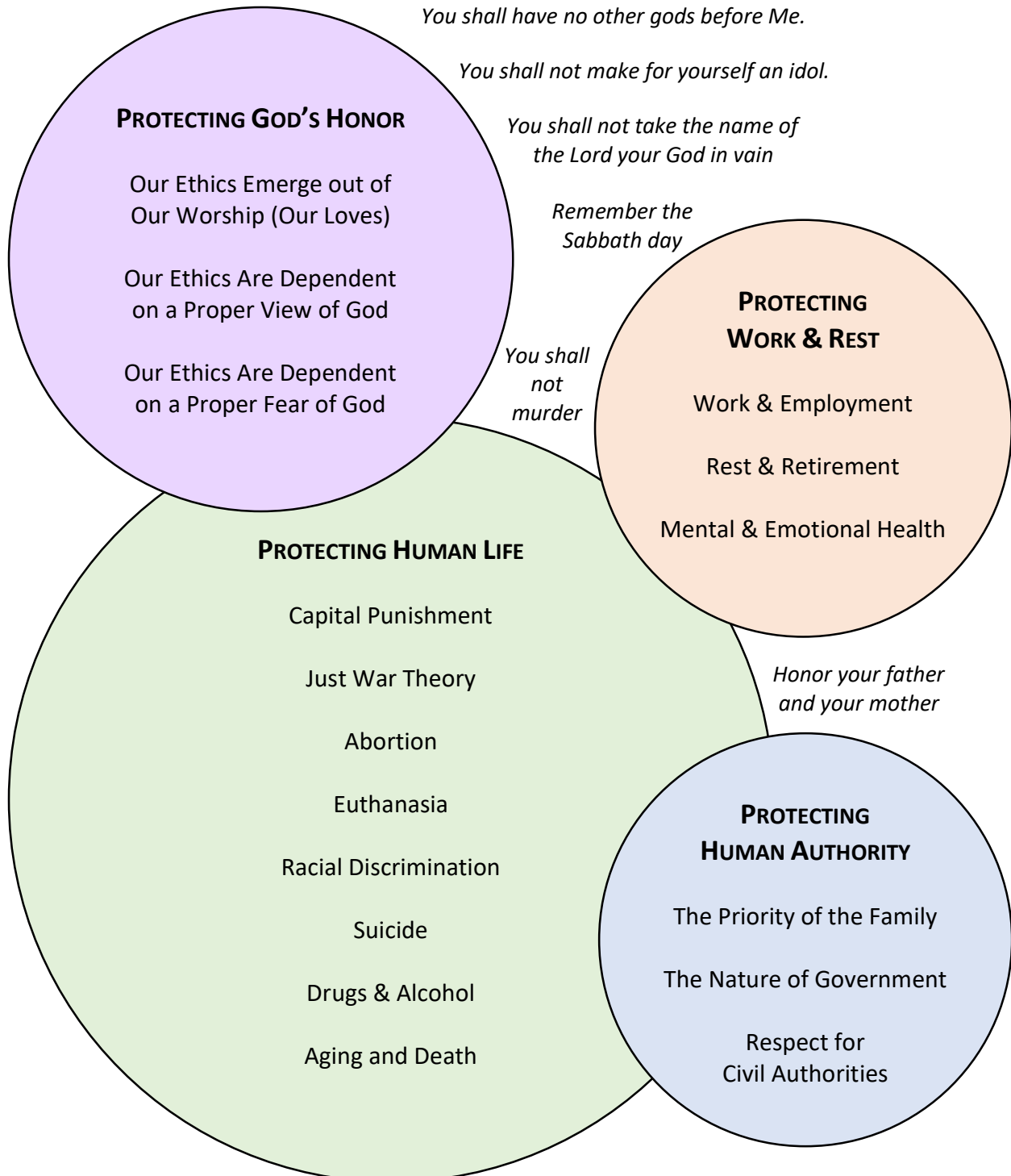
Bob Deffinbaugh

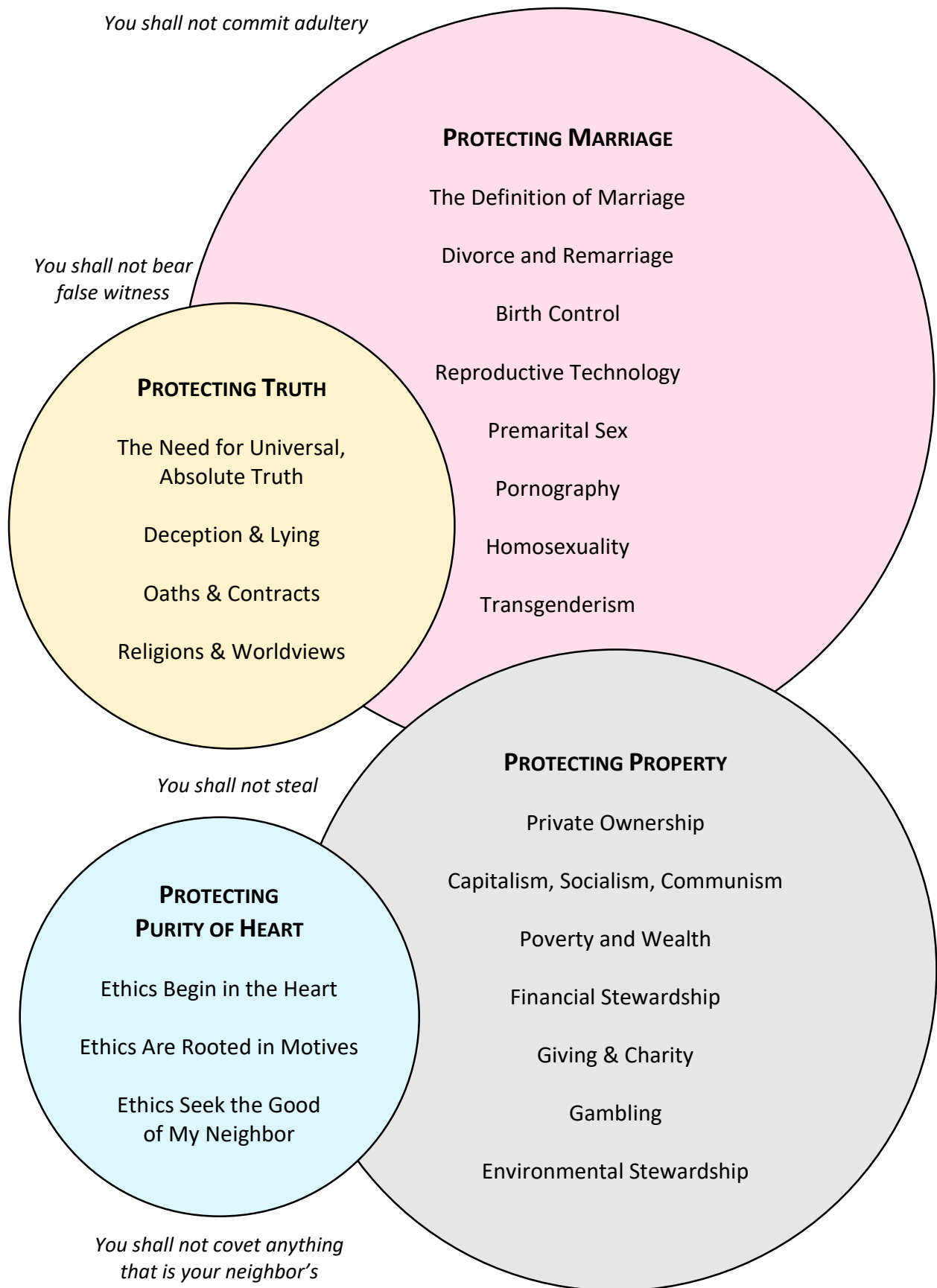
SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR FAMILY DISCUSSION:

- What is one of the most important commitments that you have made in your life (e.g., marriage vows, business contract, house mortgage, etc.)? How was this commitment formalized? How did you feel at the time of making this commitment?
- What word, verse, or thought stood to you from your study this week? Why?
- Why do you think all of the people were so eager to say that they would obey all of God's commands? What do you think was going through their minds?
- Why was the sprinkling of blood a part of this covenant ratification? What did it mean?
- What do you think this meal with God on the mountain was like? Describe it in your mind.
- Did you discover anything new, interesting, or meaningful in your study of this passage this week? Or in your reading of Matthew Henry? If so, what?
- Discuss Paul's words in Romans 7. How have you experienced Paul's struggle in your own life? What are you most thankful for in your salvation in Jesus Christ?

APPENDIX: THE ETHICS OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Wayne Grudem's book, *Christian Ethics: Living a Life That Is Pleasing to God*, uses the Ten Commandments as the basis for the ethical issues that confront us today. These "ten words" cover the spectrum of the major issues of life. Consider the issues addressed in the Ten Commandments.





FINAL THOUGHTS FROM EXODUS 20-24

Things that I have learned during this study:

Who is Jesus to you? Have you acknowledged Him as your only Savior and Lord? There is no other **name** under heaven by which people can be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus entered our world to save us from our sins. He died on the cross for you and for me. He rose again to give us eternal life. Have you placed your trust in Him? If not, do so today!

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. —Romans 10:9-10

This study guide was written and compiled by Pastor Steve Foster for use with the Exodus sermon series at Community Bible Church, Baton Rouge, LA. You are welcome to reproduce any part of it for your own personal study. For any other use, please contact pastor@516church.org.



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8354 Jefferson Highway
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