

**THE GOOD LIFE**  
**A Study of the Ten Commandments**  
**SE Online Spring Bible Study**  
Spring 2024

Synopsis:

Our eyesight can be affected by any number of issues. The shape of our eye can change over time, altering our vision and requiring us to wear glasses or contacts. Cataracts can become cloudy and make our world seem like an endless foggy morning. Our retinas can get damaged or detached, making it nearly impossible for us to see through the pain. With over two million working parts, there are ample opportunities for eyes to falter and fail.

The same is true for our souls.

Life has a way of pulling our souls out of alignment, changing the ways we see and understand the world around us. We can find our hearts distorted by the blinders of greed and selfishness. Our character can buckle under the constant weight of the compromises we make every day. Even our minds get deceived into building our plans and priorities on foundations that will never sustain us. The eyes of our soul need more than an optometrist to help them see correctly.

Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 contain a series of rules and regulations popularly known as the Ten Commandments. These “ten words” have had an incredible impact on our world. They have influenced countless legal codes, ignited incredible movements, and launched thousands of revivals. Their DNA can be found in everything from the laws we pass to the stories we tell. They are some of the most influential principles in history.

But what if the Ten Commandments were more personal than that? What if they were God’s way of helping us see the world as He created it to be? What if they were corrective lenses to bring our focus onto the things that really matter?

The Ten Commandments are the eyeglasses for our souls. They correct our vision and help us to see the world the right way. They bring clarity where there is cloudiness. They provide direction in our disorder. When we struggle to find our way in the darkness of this world, the Ten Commandments offer us a vision of who we were meant to be.

The Ten Commandments aren’t laws so much as they are lenses. They are lenses that force us to stop looking only at ourselves and to consider the needs of our neighbor. They are the lenses that help us to not only see the good life, but to step into it. More importantly, they are lenses that pull our focus off the temporary things of this world and onto the eternal God. We can’t look at the Ten Commandments without catching a glimpse of the God who first spoke them.

## Commandment One: DEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP

Kevin DeYoung: *“The commandments not only show us what God wants; they show us what God is like. They say something about His honor, His worth, and His majesty. They tell us what matters to God. We can’t disdain the law without disrespecting the Lawgiver.”*

**“You must not have any other gods but me.”** Seems like an odd place to begin a legal code. In a list that contains prohibitions against murder, perjury, and theft, a command about worship doesn’t quite feel like it fits in. And yet, this commandment is first for a reason. These commands aren’t about rules and regulations; they are about relationship. They show us what it means to live with God as our chief priority and our first love.

Left to our own devices, we would turn these commands into mere morality. We’d be content to check off the boxes and try to skate by on our own goodness. This prologue, however, reminds us that the commandments grow out of commitment. We can’t hope to follow the laws without first knowing the Lawgiver. The first commandment helps establish the reason and purpose for the rest.

### IN THE WORD:

Though the wording of the first commandment in both Exodus and Deuteronomy is identical, their context is not. Exodus 19 tells us that the Ten Commandments were first given to the Israelites about two months after they left Egypt. For the Israelites who first heard these commands, the bitterness of their slavery in Egypt still lingered on their lips.

Deuteronomy 5, on the other hand, takes place 40 years after the events of the Exodus. After spending the last four decades growing up in the wilderness and watching their parents die for their disobedience, a new generation of Israelites was on the cusp of entering the Promised Land. Moses reiterated these commands to remind them of their past and call them to a better future:

Exodus 20:1-3: **“And God spoke all these words: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.’”**

Deuteronomy 5:1-7: **“Moses summoned all Israel and said: ‘Hear, Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our ancestors that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. The Lord spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. ...And he said: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.’”**

This command hits at the core of Israel’s relationship with God. He is their God – their ONLY God. Egypt, the land of their recent slavery, worshipped over 2,000 gods, each with a specific

domain. Israel would affirm that there was only One God over all creation – a God who was worthy of all worship, honor, and praise.

The commandments begin with God because all of reality begins with God. From the very first page of the Bible, He is the One who calls this whole story into motion. The role of the first commandment, therefore, is to take us straight to the center of everything. It reminds us that there is a God to whom we owe not just our lives, but our love, as well.

The first commandment begins with a reminder of what God has done for His people: **“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt...”** Why do you think the commandments begin there? Why do we need to be reminded of grace before we talk about Law? What can happen if we get those things out of order?

These commands were given to the entire Israelite nation but are addressed to the people individually (first-person singular). What’s the connection between our corporate identity and personal responsibility? Why must we all take responsibility for living these things out?

Why does God want this place of prominence and priority in our lives? Why does He deserve to be in this place? Why is it so important that we put God in that place of priority? What happens if we allow something/someone else to stand in that place?

### **IN THE WORLD:**

So, what difference does this command make? Why include it among the 10? In a day and age where there aren’t too many people worshipping other gods, this command seems a little archaic. Yet, just because people don’t set up shrines or statues to the gods of yesteryear doesn’t mean that there aren’t still false gods among us.

*Kyle Idleman: “What if it’s not about statues? What if the gods of here and now are not cosmic deities with strange names? What if they take identities that are so ordinary that we don’t recognize them as gods at all? What if we do our ‘kneeling’ and our ‘bowing’ with our imaginations, our checkbooks, our search engines, our calendars? What if I told you that every sin you are struggling with, every discouragement you are dealing with, even the lack of purpose you’re living with are because of idolatry?”*

An idol can be anything we give priority to. When we put anything above God, it becomes an idol that draws us away from true worship. Our hearts have an uncanny ability to take good things and put them in God’s place. We can take the very gifts He’s given us and elevate them above Him. Our idols are revealed by the ways we spend our time, our money, and our effort.

Ultimately, the First Commandment protects us because it keeps us from devoting ourselves to powerless 'gods.' Though the idols of our hearts promise to bring us life, meaning, and significance, they lack the ability to give us anything. This prohibition against other 'gods' keeps us from wasting our lives.

What are some of the idols of our day? In what ways have these idols taken the place of God? What do we see people giving/sacrificing in order to make these idols happy? How do these idols compare to the idols of Israel's day?

How do we identify the idols in our lives? What does the way you spend your time, your money, and your effort say about the 'gods' you worship? What are some ways you need to smash that idol's power in your life?

How do our idols compare to the God of the Universe? Why don't they even begin to compare to Him? Why, then, are we so tempted to chase after false gods? How does the first commandment assure us that God really wants us to know Him and have a relationship with Him?

#### **GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was your biggest takeaway from the video teaching time? What comes to mind when you think about the Ten Commandments? How do you think this study will change/expand your view of the Commandments?
2. Read Exodus 19:16-20:3. Try to imagine the scene when Moses and the Israelites first received these commandments. What stands out to you as you read this passage? How would you have responded had you been there? What do these commandments reveal to us about God's power and nature?
3. Why do the Commandments first remind Israel of how God rescued them? Why is it important to remember that God's grace comes before His commands? What happens if we get the order mixed up? How does God's grace motivate us to live differently?
4. What are some of the "gods" of our culture? In what ways do we see these idols in our everyday lives? How are they similar to (and different from) the idols in Israel's day? What do these idols require from people? What sacrifices do people make for them?
5. Read Psalm 115:3-8. Think about the idols of our culture. How do people become like them? In what ways do our idols change us? Has there ever been a time in your life where you could sense your idols changing you? If we become like the gods we worship, how can we make sure to keep the true God in His rightful place?

## Commandment Two: THE RIGHT IMAGE

David Gill: *“To think that we should represent the God of the universe by bits of clay or wood is as insulting as forcing a distinguished visiting dignitary to address an important gathering while wearing a clown costume. God is great, higher than the heavens; any idol, no matter how large, is puny by comparison.”*

We live in a culture obsessed with image. We spend hours curating our lives on social media so that people can see how successful and happy we are. We search through our closets for an outfit that will make us stand out from the crowd. We tell the version of the story that puts us in the best light. So much of our time and energy goes into making sure that people see the version of us we want them to see.

Interestingly, the second commandment deals with God and His image. God, too, seems to be concerned with putting the right image out there. He can't be contained in idols or images. His majesty is too great to be captured in any portrait. Though we try to increase our standing by limiting what people see, God's glory is only diminished by our limitations. After all, a living God can't be confined to a lifeless statue.

### **IN THE WORD:**

Though the second commandment seems like it covers much of the same ground as the first, they actually speak to two different issues. Whereas the first command talks about the worship of other gods, this command speaks to the appropriate worship of Israel's God. Though the nations around them created statues and tokens of their gods, the Israelites were prohibited from using anything to represent their God:

**Exodus 20:4-6: “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”**

**Deuteronomy 5:8-10: “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”**

Interestingly, the second commandment is the first to be broken. After spending 40 days on the mountain receiving the Law, Moses came down from Mount Sinai to discover that the Israelites had made a golden calf in honor of the god who brought them out of Egypt (Exodus 32:1-5). They had grown so accustomed to Egypt's worship of statues that they thought that was the way they were to worship their God!

We associate this command with statues of gold and silver. But, as J.I. Packer has pointed out, it's about metal images and mental images. What are some images of God we have in our mind today? What do these images communicate about Him? How do they only tell a partial truth about Him?

If you were to read through the rest of the Old Testament Law, you would find over 50 of its 613 laws are about making idols. Why do you think this command is reiterated again and again? What's so important about it? What's at stake if we confine God to an image?

What are some modern-day images and icons we use to portray God? In what ways are these images helpful? In what ways do they limit our picture of God? How do we know when something has crossed the line to become a hindrance to true worship?

### **IN THE WORLD:**

What happens when you try to limit the limitless? As finite creatures, we need to acknowledge that our attempts to capture the infinite in an image or statue fall woefully short of God's true glory. There's nothing we can ever think or make that comes close to capturing who God is. His ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Like crayon sketches of a sunset, our efforts to capture His beauty and majesty depict only a fraction of reality.

So how do we violate this commandment today? To be sure, there aren't too many people walking around with statues of God in their pockets. All of us, however, walk around with pictures of God in our minds. We can let dogmatic systems box in the living God. We allow our own stereotypes to say who God can or can't use for His purposes. While a picture can be a helpful reminder, you can't have a relationship with a photograph. Pictures always have limits.

The truth is that we don't need a static image of God. He has already given us walking, talking glimpses of His true image. At the very beginning, God made men and women in His own image (Gen. 1:27). Every human being is, in some small way, a reflection of God.

Greater still is the One who was the fullest expression of God's image. The New Testament tells us that God sent His Son to be the perfect image of His nature and character. Jesus Christ perfectly captured who God is. When we look at Him, we see the Father (John 14:9). There's no statue that compares to the Son. There's no image or idol that equals the Incarnation. If we want to worship God for who He really is then Jesus is the only image we need.

**Colossians 1:15-17: "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."**

What do you think it means for humans to be made “in God’s image”? What does this say about the way God views us? How should it affect the ways we look at and treat our neighbor? How does the second commandment protect both God’s image and those made in His image?

As Colossians 1 says, Jesus makes the invisible God visible. What does Jesus show us about God? When you think about who Jesus was, what qualities/characteristics of God does He show us? How does Jesus show us what it means to be created in God’s image?

What happens to our worship when we limit God to a statue? What are some of the dangers of making God in our own image rather than letting Him be who He is? Make a list of how many characteristics of God you can think of. How does this list speak to how big and multi-faceted our God is?

#### **GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was your biggest takeaway from the video teaching time? How did it change the way you look at the second commandment? What does this command have to say about the ways we worship and think of God?
2. Read Exodus 20:4-6. What do you see as the main difference between this commandment and the first one? In what ways does the first speak to who we worship and the second to how we worship? Why do you think God so jealously guards how we represent Him?
3. How does knowing that we are created in God’s image change the way we think of His image? How does it change the way we see the people around us? In what ways would our attitudes/actions towards others change if we really saw them as people made in the image of God?
4. As part of your personal study, you were asked to make a list of all God’s characteristics. Share your lists with one another. How are your lists similar? How are they different? What attributes did others write down that you neglected? How does this caution us against merely holding to our own “images” of God?
5. Read Romans 1:21-32. How does Paul describe idolatry in these verses? How does he see idolatry as the gateway to all other forms of sin? How do these other sins grow out of a misunderstanding of who God is? What are some practical ways our images of God affect the way we live? How do we keep our eyes focused on Jesus – the true image of who God is?

## Commandment Three: HOLLOWING THE HALLOWED

Jan Milic Lochman: *“To misuse the name of God means...that instead of placing ourselves at God’s disposal we place Him at ours, domesticating His holy name for our unholy or pseudo-holy purposes. The God of liberation is turned into a domestic deity, a household god.”*

What’s in a name? Though Shakespeare postulated that names aren’t all that significant, the Bible would disagree. Most biblical names communicate something about who a person is or what they’ve come to do. The name “Eve” means “life” – a name befitting the mother of all people. “Israel” means “He wrestles with God,” describing both the man and the people who would come to bear his name. As you might imagine, the name “Jesus” carries incredible meaning, as well, reminding us of a truth that permeates all Scripture: “The Lord Saves.”

What’s true of our names is also true of God’s name. When God revealed His name in Exodus 3, He was telling us something about who He is. He is “I AM,” the God who always is, always was, and always will be. Whenever we say His name, we proclaim His nature. Whether in our words or in our deeds, we should always revere both God and His name. Failing to do so hollows out the most hallowed name we know.

### **IN THE WORD:**

YHWH.

In the English language, that combination of letters doesn’t mean anything. To the Hebrew people, those letters form the most important combination in history. Those four simple letters represent the Divine Name – “Yahweh.” This is the name God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3, the name that His people would call upon in their time of distress. It’s this name that is the subject of the third commandment. After being prohibited from limiting their God, the Israelites were cautioned against misrepresenting Him:

**Exodus 20:7: “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”**

Certainly, this command speaks to our speech. We shouldn’t casually toss the name of God around. Neither should we invoke His name in ways that go against His character. Using His name in profanity literally profanes and degrades the name that is higher than any other name. We should use caution whenever we would speak God’s name in haste or in waste.

For as tempting as it would be to limit this command to profanity, however, there is also a deeper meaning here. To “take” God’s name could also mean “to bear” or “to carry.” The nation of Israel was called by the name of the Lord (2 Chron. 7:14). They carried His name wherever they went. To wear His name and walk in a way contrary to His character would be more damaging to His name than any words could ever be.

Does your name have any special meaning or significance? Do you know what your name means? Has this had any sort of impact on the way you've lived? How has it changed you? What does God's name mean? What does this tell us about Him? How does it change the way we relate to Him?

Some translations of this command tell us not to use God's name "in vain," a word meaning 'worthless' or 'empty.' What are some 'empty' ways that people can use God's name? What are some ways you have misused or mishandled His name?

What damage does it do when we misuse God's name? How can our words/actions give people the wrong perspective of who God is? Has there ever been a time when you saw someone misrepresent God like that? What were the repercussions?

### **IN THE WORLD:**

Like the rest of the commandments, this one contains both good news and bad news.

The bad news is that God is very particular about how we invoke His name. The ways we speak His name – and more importantly, the ways we bear His name – matter to Him. That's because His name is synonymous with His character. He is the eternal God. He is the God who is. To utilize God's name at all brings His power, glory, and honor into the situation. When we speak His name, we pull the eternal God into our temporary circumstances.

The good news of this command is that God wants us to know His name. He wants us to use His name. But, it's not just about knowing His name; it's about knowing Him. After all, you don't tell someone your name unless you expect to have some kind of relationship with them. God wants us to know Him personally. Even better, He wants us to know Him intimately. The God of the Universe wants us to know Him so well that we could recognize how He wants His name to be used. Those who love God watch how they speak of Him.

But remember, it's not just about the words we say. This command also has to do with the ways we live. As those who bear the name of God (Revelation 14:1), we need to be aware that we carry His name wherever we go. Are we misrepresenting Him by the things we do? Are the things we do throughout the week betraying the allegiance we proclaim on Sundays? Our lifestyle will ultimately reveal whether we're taking God's name or faking His name.

Martin Luther: *"With the words 'Thou shall not take the name of God in vain,' God at the same time gives us to understand that we are to use His name properly...in service of truth and all that is good...when we swear properly, when we teach properly, when we call on His name in time of need, or praise and thank Him in time of prosperity... God is well pleased with the right use of His name and will as richly reward it, even as He will terribly punish its misuse."*

As “Christians,” we carry the name of Christ with us wherever we go. How does it make you feel to know that you carry His name? How should that knowledge motivate us to live? How can the world learn the wrong lessons about who God is by the way we carry His name?

Have you ever heard anyone misuse God’s name by saying something like “God told me to...” when it was clear God wasn’t behind the message? Has there ever been a time when you did something like that? How do these instances misuse the name of God?

God wants us to know and use His name. What are some right ways we utilize His name? What does it look like for us to carry His name in ways that are positive and bring life? How can proper use of God’s name help our neighbors to come to know Him better?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was your biggest takeaway from the video teaching time? If someone asked you to explain the third commandment, what would you say it is all about? What does this commandment teach us about God’s name and the ways we use it?
2. Read Exodus 20:7 and Deuteronomy 5:11. What comes to mind when you think of this commandment? What penalty does God attach to this command? Why do you think He takes this issue so seriously? How would you feel if someone used or invoked your name in a way that went against your character?
3. In the personal reflection time, you were asked to think of some ways you’ve seen people misuse God’s name. How did they mishandle God’s name – either in words or in actions? What were some of the consequences of violating this command? How did their actions/words miscommunicate who God is and what He is like?
4. Read Exodus 3:13-15. Here, God reveals His name – “I AM” (Yahweh) – to Moses. What does this name reveal to us about who God is? What does it say about His power and His permanence? How does knowing God’s name change our relationship to Him? How does knowing that He shares His name with us change the way we see ourselves?
5. As Christians, we carry Christ’s name with us (Rev. 14:1). How should this change the way we speak/live? What are some right ways that we can use/carry God’s name? How does the way we live affect other people’s perception of who God is? What’s one practical change you can make this week to change how you use/carry God’s name?

## Commandment Four: INHABITING TIME

Wayne Muller: *“If we refuse rest until we are finished, we will never rest until we die. Sabbath dissolves the artificial urgency of our days, because it liberates us from our need to be finished.”*

Our lives are defined by time. The hours become days, the days stack up into weeks, and the weeks accumulate into years. Like waves smacking against the seashore, the relentless onslaught of time batters us all. It doesn't slow or stop and it never ceases or concedes. From the moment we are born, we find ourselves trapped in the flow of time.

Though we often look at the Sabbath as a bygone relic of the Old Testament Law, the principle behind it still speaks to us today. The Sabbath serves as a signpost on our journey through time. It invites us to keep track of our weekly rhythms and to mark out a sacred space in our temporal hustle and bustle. More than that, Sabbath reminds us of the eternal God – a God who stands outside of time. Done rightly, Sabbath can be a day when time and eternity meet.

### IN THE WORD:

In some ways, the fourth commandment is one of contradiction. On the one hand, it is a command about rest. It tells us to take one day out of seven as a day of rest and reflection for the Lord. On the other hand, it is a command about work, commanding us to use the other six days of the week to continue the work God began in the creation. The twin rhythms of work and rest remind us that our lives require both vocation and vacation.

Interestingly, Exodus and Deuteronomy each add their own unique spin on this commandment. While God's creative work in Eden is at the forefront of the Exodus account, His delivering work in Egypt comes into focus in Deuteronomy:

**Exodus 20:8-11: “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 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 animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”**

**Deuteronomy 5:12-15: “Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. 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.”**

By restating the command in a different way, Moses reminds us that there are two kinds of work that require rest. Exodus cautions us about devoting too much of our time to the work we love. There's some work we do that feels like Eden. It is creative and life-giving. We must rest from that work before we give it too much of our lives. Deuteronomy, on the other hand, speaks to the kind of work that feels like Egypt. It is difficult. It seems to never end. The Sabbath promises rest from the drudgery and bondage from that kind of work, as well.

Why are work and rest both essential to our lives? What happens to us if we go to extremes with either of those practices? Reflecting on your own life, is it more difficult for you to rest or for you to work? What are some of the influences that helped shape the way you view rest and work?

Exodus and Deuteronomy caution us against two different kinds of work. There is the work of Eden and the work of Egypt. How have you experienced joy-filled and creative work? Why did you have to be reminded to rest from that? How have you experienced difficult work? How did Sabbath give you relief from that work?

What are some of the weekly rhythms that you keep? In what ways would Sabbath transform those rhythms? How does Sabbath help us maintain a good life rhythm? In what ways does it help us to "mark time" and keep our lives from getting away from us?

### **IN THE WORLD:**

Sabbath makes little sense in a world like ours. It's hard to slow down and rest when you live in a time of fast food, high-speed internet, and quick fixes. Time may not be money, but it's still a commodity – one we tend to run out of at an alarming rate. With the clock constantly ticking against us, Sabbath can feel like a waste of time.

What we fail to recognize, however, is that Sabbath made even less sense in the days when it was first practiced. In that time, most people were day laborers. They had to get a job that morning in order to provide for the day ahead. They had few storehouses. They had no savings. If they didn't work that day, they wouldn't eat. Sabbath was a bold declaration of their trust that God would work to provide for them even when they couldn't.

Sabbath, then, is more than just a day of rest. It is an act of hope. It is a statement of our utmost trust that God has – and is! – more than enough to take care of us. It is a bold declaration that our Savior is also our Sustainer. He will provide for our needs. He will give us what we lack. When we rest, we trust in the One whose work sustains and maintains the universe.

Mark Buchanan: *"Real Sabbath, the kind that empties and fills us, depends on complete confidence and trust. And confidence and trust like that are rooted in a deep conviction that*

*God is good and God is sovereign. There's no rest for those who don't believe that. If God works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called to His purposes, you can relax. If He doesn't, start worrying. If God can take any mess, any mishap, any wastage, and wreckage, any anything, and choreograph beauty and meaning from it, then you can take a day off. If He can't get busy. Either God's always at work...or you need to get busy."*

What are some objections you've heard about taking Sabbath? What have been some of your own objections to the practice? How would the regular practice of rest challenge you? How would it improve your life/relationships/work?

What are some practical ways you can practice this commandment? Though the Sabbath was originally a day, it can be any time we devote to God – even if it's a couple of hours. What are some practices that would help you rest and worship? How would these practices illustrate your trust and hope in God?

Both of the Sabbath commands stress the importance of blessing others with the gift of Sabbath. How can you encourage others to enjoy a day of rest? What ways can you make sure that the gift of Sabbath is a blessing you share with the people around you?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was your biggest takeaway from the video teaching time? How do you normally view the fourth commandment and the practice of Sabbath? How did this week's study challenge some of the assumptions you have about Sabbath?
2. Read Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. How are these two commands different from one another? How have you experienced the two types of work mentioned in these passages? Why do we need to rest from the work of both Egypt and Eden? How does this commandment keep work from dominating us?
3. Why does the fourth commandment deal with both work and rest? Why are vocation and vacation important to our lives? What happens if we lack either of them? What happens if we fill our lives with too much of either?
4. What has your practice of Sabbath looked like in the past? What are some practical tips you would share with your group about practicing Sabbath? Spend some time encouraging each member of your Group to talk about some of the practices that help them rest and reconnect with God.
5. Read Hebrews 4:1-10. How does the promise of Sabbath rest still apply to us today? In what ways does the Gospel invite us to rest in God's work and put our trust in Him?

## Commandment Five: YOUR ORIGINAL NEIGHBORS

Brett McCracken: “[The nuclear family] is our first community – our most proximate and continuous teacher in life. While families take on different shapes and sizes, and various degrees of health, this micro-community represents the people most likely to shape who we become. One’s nuclear family is a God-given gift... Rather than free agents who roam the planet without aim or attachment, we are rooted, enmeshed, and formed within this particular group of people we didn’t choose.”

Family. Friends. Coworkers. Neighbors. Siblings. Aunts and uncles. Nephews and nieces. Boyfriends. Girlfriends. Acquaintances. Sons and daughters. The give and take of relationships is nothing new to us. In many ways, our relationships help give our lives purpose and meaning. We tend to define ourselves by who we’re related to or those we choose to associate with. Most of life takes place at the intersection of all our relationships.

Yet, there’s one relationship that is foundational to every other relationship we have. Our parents are our first neighbors. It’s through them that we come to understand the world and our place in it. Their example and impact – whether good or bad – sets the stage for the rest of our lives. Perhaps that’s why the fifth commandment prioritizes the relationship between parents and their children. Children should honor their parents. Parents should be worthy of honor. The way we live with our first neighbors will determine so much about the way we live in every other neighborhood.

### **IN THE WORD:**

In popular imagination, the fifth commandment reads like a bit of an interlude. It’s as though Moses, sick of talking merely to the adults in the crowd, turns his attention to the children and youth gathered at Sinai. Yet, this commandment gives no indication that it is directed merely at children. There are no qualifiers or age limits on it. The command to honor our parents is given to the same audience as all the rest. It is a command suitable for all ages:

**Exodus 20:12: “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”**

**Deuteronomy 5:16: “Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”**

This commandment stands unique among the Ten because it is the only one to contain a promise with no prohibition. The words ‘no’ or ‘not’ appear nowhere in this declaration, meaning that the command is only stated in the positive. What’s more, the command contains a very explicit promise, one for long life and prosperity. It’s likely this guarantee is not so much about reward as it is reciprocity. Those who show honor to their parents will likely receive that same kind of honor from their own children.

But, what does it mean to “honor” our parents? The Hebrew word used here is related to words meaning ‘heavy’ or ‘weighty.’ The idea, then, is that we treat our parents with weight. We recognize the seriousness and the heaviness of the role they have played in our lives. They served as our guides when we were unable to lead ourselves. They took care of our needs and provided for us when we had no way to care for ourselves. The fifth command calls us to remember the duties a parent takes on and the debts their children can never repay.

Do you often think of this command as one directed merely to children? Why is it easy for us to view the commandment in this way? What difference does it make to view this command as one directed to adults? How do adult children ‘honor’ their parents?

What kind of ‘weight’ do parents carry? What responsibilities has God given them when it comes to their children? Think of some of the physical, emotional, and spiritual duties parents have towards their children. If done rightly, why is parenting worthy of such honor and respect?

Read Ephesians 6:1-3. Why do you think this commandment contains a promise? How do parents teach their children what following this command looks like? What did you learn about this commandment from the way your parents treated your grandparents?

### **IN THE WORLD:**

Jen Wilkin: *“Good parents make earth look and function a bit more like heaven.”*

While this command may not be limited by age, its practice may look a little different depending on how old you are. A young child honors their parents through obedience and submission. Their responsibility is to defer to their parents’ rules and authority. As we mature and we move out of our parents’ home, those responsibilities shift. Obedience becomes esteem. Submission turns into service. We can still give them our respect long after we’ve grown past the need to give them our obedience.

Far from being a command merely for children, this command also speaks to parents. If children should honor their parents, then parents need to be people worth honoring. Children often mimic their parents. From the way they look to the way they carry themselves, so much of who they are is modeled on what they saw in their parents. Godly parents should leave a spiritual life that their children hope to aspire to, as well. God has given us ‘weight’ as parents; our greatest desire should be to carry that weight well.

What about parents who failed to carry that weight? How should we honor them? Should we even honor them at all? The repetition of this command in Deuteronomy offers us a clue. Those who heard Moses’ final speech had just spent 4 decades of their lives paying for their parents’

mistake. They wandered the desert for 40 years because their parents disobeyed and distrusted God. And yet, God still asked them to keep this commandment. We may not feel like our parents are worthy of honor, but our obedience to this commandment is not about them. We can honor our father and mother not because of who they are, but because of the perfect Heavenly Father who spoke these commands.

Thinking about your own parents, how has “honoring” your parents changed over the course of your lifetime? What are some ways that you honor them in your life now? What are some ways we can continue to honor our parents even after they are gone?

How did your parents impact your view of who God is? In other words, what did your earthly father teach you about your Heavenly Father (both intentionally and unintentionally)? What kind of effect do parents typically have on their kids’ spiritual lives? How does this impact continue even as they are adults?

What are some ways that we can honor imperfect parents? How can extending them grace be an act that brings honor? How can we honor those people who were like fathers and mothers to us? Is it important that we honor those who invested in our lives?

#### **GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was your biggest takeaway from the video teaching time? What normally comes to mind when you think of this commandment? How did this week’s study challenge some of your preconceived ideas?
2. Read Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16. Do you think it’s significant that this command is only stated in the positive? Why do you think it carries a promise with it? How do we follow this command today? What are some ways we, as the church, can show proper honor to parents?
3. How does honoring our parents change at different life stages? What does it look like for young children vs. young adults, etc.? How can we continue to honor our parents into adulthood? What does it look like to honor them when they are gone?
4. What weight does this commandment put on parents? What responsibility do fathers and mothers have to be people worthy of honor? What were some ways you saw this exhibited in your own parents? How did you try to impress this on your own children?
5. Read Ephesians 6:1-4. How do parents teach their children – intentionally or unintentionally – about God? What spiritual lessons did your parents teach you (whether by positive or negative example)? How has their example affected you?

## Commandment Six: GOD'S FIRST GIFT

Christopher Watkin: *"The universe is not necessary, and God did not create because He had to. God did not make the universe to satisfy something that was incomplete in Him. He does not need the universe in order to be who He is, and He does not need us in order to be fulfilled... It is through grace that the Christian is born again, but it is also through grace that the universe is born in the first place."*

What's the greatest gift you've ever received? Maybe it was the glistening new bike parked under the Christmas tree when you were a child. Maybe it's a present you carry with you to remind yourself of a loved one long gone. It might even be something as simple as an act of service someone provided in a difficult time. Some of those gifts sit on our desk or shelves. Others we can only hold on the mantelpiece of our hearts.

Of all the gifts we've ever been given, the first gift – the gift of life – is the best we've ever received. The fact that we are even here in the first place is a testament to the graciousness and generosity of our God. Our very existence is a Heavenly present. Everything that lives and breathes has been given that same gift. Everyone we encounter is far more than a cosmic accident or random coincidence. They are here by Divine design. The sixth commandment invites us to recognize life for the gift that it is – and to do everything within our power to protect it.

### IN THE WORD:

Up until this point, many of the commandments have contained some measure of exposition, helping us understand what the command means and how we can live it out. The sixth commandment offers us no such insight. Its brevity cuts straight to the heart of the matter:

Exodus 20:13/Deuteronomy 5:17: **"You must not murder."**

If it seems short in English, it's even more succinct in Hebrew. The original language contains only two words: *"No murder."* The fourth commandment had an entire paragraph dedicated to it. This command (as well as the two that follow it) hardly qualifies as a sentence. Its simple and straightforward prohibition gives us a declarative word about God's views on life.

But why begin here? As the commandments turn their attention to our relationship with our neighbors, why begin with a command that seems so basic? It turns out the simplicity is the point. If we are going to love our neighbors, then the first and most elementary step in that process is allowing them to live. You can't love your neighbor and take their life. At its most basic level, love requires life.

That may sound too rudimentary for you. Keep in mind, however, that murder was the first sin outside of Eden. When Cain saw that Abel's sacrifice was better than his own, he murderously attacked his brother (Gen. 4:1-16). When faced with comparison, the first inclination of our

hearts isn't to better ourselves or turn back to God. We want to eliminate the competition. We want to see them suffer. We might not go so far as to take their life, but we know how to ruin it. There aren't too many people who want to murder their neighbor, but there are plenty of us who would be content to kill their reputation. Why use weapons when words will do the trick?

The sixth commandment reminds us that life is more than a right; it's a gift. We are here – our neighbors are here – because God put us here. In His grace, God decided that we should exist. Each of our lives are a testimony to His power, His generosity, and His creativity. God is the One who gave us life. None of us have the right to take that gift away.

Nothing has to exist, and yet God has created a world full of life. What does this show us about how God views and values life? What does this show about how He values us? How is murder a blatant attempt to try and interfere with God's domain?

What are some ways our culture devalues life today? How does this fall short of God's original design and desire for life? In what ways should the church lead the way in protecting and valuing life? How is this the most basic way for us to love our neighbor?

Why do you think this commandment is so direct and to-the-point? How broadly do you think God wants us to interpret this command? Is it just about murder, or do you think He wants us to protect and value their life, as well? What would that look like in practice?

### **IN THE WORLD:**

Kevin DeYoung: *"All of life matters to God."*

This command feels like it should be an easy one for us to follow. For most of us, the closest we've come to murder is watching a police procedural or listening to a true crime podcast. Unfortunately, this command is about more than just murder. Jesus would later amplify and expand this commandment in a way that convicts us all:

**Matthew 5:21-24: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."**

Murder is both syndrome and symptom. It is the fullest expression of sin's disease, a wholesale rejection of love for God and love for our neighbor. It is also a symptom of a much broader

problem. We may not all be murderers, but we all harbor anger in our hearts. We may not go through the motions of murder, but we've all gone through its emotions. We know what it's like to be mad at someone else. We've all lost our temper in a moment of rage. Just because we haven't killed anyone with our hands doesn't mean we haven't done it in our hearts.

Even if our anger doesn't lead to murder, it can lead to indifference. Anger trains our minds to look at others with apathy. We don't care if we hurt their feelings. We don't care what happens to them so long as we get what we want. When we live with anger, it desensitizes us to both the people around us and the God in whose image they were created.

Why do you think Jesus spoke so strongly against anger? How does anger change the way we view our neighbors? How does anger change the way we treat our neighbors? In what ways does it help set the stage for the violation of the sixth commandment?

Look back at that passage from Matthew 5. How does Jesus tell us to handle our anger? Is there anyone in your life you need to be reconciled with? What keeps you from taking that step? Pray that God would help you navigate the next steps in that relationship?

Read James 1:19-21. What does James tell us here about human anger? How do you normally deal with your anger? How does this compare to the ways James tells us to handle our anger? What are some ways you can practically live out this passage?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was your biggest takeaway from the video teaching time? Now that we're past the halfway point of this study, what's been the biggest lesson you've learned? What are you looking forward to in these final five commandments?
2. Read Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17. Why do you think this commandment is so short? In what ways is keeping this command a simple thing to do? In what ways is it difficult? How is life God's first (and best!) gift to us?
3. Throughout this series, we've talked about how the commands are lenses through which we should see the world. How would having a broad view of this command change the way we approach life? How would it change how we view our neighbors?
4. Read Matthew 5:21-24. How does Jesus deepen the sixth command? How does He make it more challenging for us to follow this command? On a personal level, how does this command challenge the ways you normally handle your anger?
5. John Calvin said that this command requires us to defend and enrich the life of our neighbors. Why should we, as Christians, want to see our neighbors have a better life? What are some practical ways we can encourage human flourishing in our communities?

## Commandment Seven: KEEPING THE COVENANT

Jen Wilkin: *"If the sixth command prohibited regarding our neighbor as expendable, the seventh prohibits regarding our neighbor as consumable."*

Though we don't talk too often about the concept of covenant, it was absolutely essential to the Israelite's understanding of God. Their relationship to God hinged on the covenant they made with Him at Sinai – a covenant represented by the Ten Commandments. These commands were more than laws; they were the guidelines for living in a relationship with God. They painted a picture of commitment and devotion to the One who had brought them out of slavery. Each command helped them understand what everyday faithfulness looks like.

In a sense, this same motivation guides the words of the seventh commandment. Faithfulness to a covenant God looks a lot like faithfulness to our partners in another covenant relationship – marriage. Whereas the fifth commandment protected the relationship between parents and their children, the seventh commandment sets its sights on the relationship between a husband and wife. Their faithfulness to one another is the foundation of the home. More than that, it's a picture of the Gospel – a living, breathing illustration of the God who has taken us as His own.

### **IN THE WORD:**

In many ways, the seventh commandment hits at the core of what all the commandments are about. When God brought the people out to Mount Sinai, He gave them these commands to ratify His covenant with them. Their faithfulness to the commands would serve as a physical illustration of their commitment to Him. Likewise, the seventh command protects a physical illustration of another covenant – the covenant of marriage between a husband and a wife:

Exodus 20:14/Deuteronomy 5:18: **"You must not commit adultery."**

In the Garden, God established marriage as the life-long union between a man and a woman. His intention for a husband and wife to become "one flesh" and experience a unity with one another unlike any other relationship. Their emotional and spiritual unity would find physical expression in sex. As designed by God, marriage is the only relationship with the strength and durability to be able to properly handle this kind of intimacy.

The seventh commandment, then, is designed to keep sex within its proper boundaries. Flames inside a fireplace can warm a house; they can also burn down the house if left to wander. In the same way, the prohibition against adultery reminds us that sex is powerful. The same power that unites a husband and wife can destroy and divide a family when used in the wrong way. In marriage (and in faith) keeping the covenant is about keeping ourselves committed.

Interestingly, this commandment often accused the Israelites in more ways than one. Though this commandment warns against the physical act of adultery, it also confronted the spiritually unfaithful. Like a bride chasing after new suitors, the Israelites had a habit of looking for

abandoning their God to pursue other lovers. Their wandering eyes had a habit of taking their bodies and souls right along with them. The prophets, in particular, equated the idolatry of the nation to the adultery of an unfaithful spouse. Hosea, whose entire life was an object lesson in the perils of an unfaithful spouse, went so far as to frame Israel's unfaithfulness in terms of the Ten Commandments:

**Hosea 4:1-2: "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...'"**

Commandments five and seven both deal with relationships within the nuclear family. Why do you think God focused in on the family like this? How do these two commands protect the family? Why is this important?

Both the Hebrew and Greek words for 'adultery' prohibit all forms of sex outside of marriage. Why do you think the Law limits sex in this way? How is this contrary to our culture's view of sex? In what ways does keeping this command protect us from the damage unbounded sex can do to a life (or to a culture)?

How are adultery and idolatry linked? How is faithfulness to a spouse similar to faithfulness to God? How are they different? How do we keep God as our primary love?

### **IN THE WORLD:**

*Timothy Keller: "Sex is God's appointed way for two people to reciprocally say to one another, 'I belong completely, permanently, and exclusively to you.' You must not use sex to say anything less. So, according to the Bible, a covenant is necessary for sex. It creates a place of security for vulnerability and intimacy. But though a marriage covenant is necessary for sex, sex is also necessary for the maintenance of the covenant. It is your covenant renewal service."*

The seventh commandment reminds us that our God is a covenant God. He's the God who created the covenant of marriage. He's the God who entered into a covenant with the people of Israel at Sinai. He's the God who gave us a new covenant based on the body and blood of His Son. At every turn, God has shown Himself to be a covenant God. Even better, He's a God who has shown Himself to be completely and utterly faithful to the covenants He makes.

A completely faithful God deserves complete faithfulness in return. When we see how God keeps His covenants, we should want to be just like Him. Perhaps that's why Jesus deepened the meaning of the seventh commandment. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that

avoiding adultery is about more than the physical act. If we want to keep our covenants the way God keeps His, then every part of us – body, mind and soul – needs to be held to the highest level of faithfulness:

**Matthew 5:27-28: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”**

Read Matthew 5:27-30. How seriously does Jesus take this command about adultery and lust? Do we take it as seriously as He does? Why or why not? What kind of steps does He ask us to take in our struggle for purity? What would this look like in our culture?

In what ways does our culture have too high a view of sex? How have we elevated sex to an unhealthy place? In what ways does our culture have too low a view of sex? How have we missed the true purpose God created it for?

What does faithfulness look like in a sex-saturated culture like ours? How does the ethic called for by the seventh commandment (and by Jesus) set God’s people apart? In what ways does the Gospel hold out hope and grace for those wrestling with sexual sin?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was your biggest takeaway from the video teaching time? How significant is it that God devoted a second command to the family? What does this tell us about how the church should value and protect the family?
2. Read Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 5:18. Again, this commandment is stated simply and directly. Why do you think God included this commandment in the list of ten? Why is God so concerned that we handle the gift of sex rightly? What damage can it do?
3. Read Matthew 5:27-30. How strongly did Jesus speak against adultery? How did He deepen the original commandment? How does this help us understand the true meaning of faithfulness? What does faithfulness look like in our relationships with both God and with our spouses?
4. How is our culture’s view of sex both too high and too low? How have we elevated sex to an unhealthy place? In what ways has our culture missed the point of what sex is?
5. Read Ephesians 5:21-33. Paul tells us that the covenant between a husband and wife is a picture of the covenant between us and God. How does marriage paint a picture of the Gospel? Between this command and the fifth, how can our homes represent Christ?

## Commandment Eight: PERSONAL PROPERTY

Laura Schlessinger: *“The commandments so far have dealt with issues of divine authority, life and death, honoring family, sacred time, etc. Suddenly the gears are shifted from holy spirits and holy relationships to the issue of things. God considered the possession of things of sufficient importance to include respecting ownership as one of the Big Ten.”*

A commandment about property rights seems a little trivial in a list of commands prescribing proper worship and protecting our lives and families. After all, we’re just talking about stuff, aren’t we? Protecting our property seems like it belongs on a lesser tier of the ethical hierarchy. And yet, God cared so much about this issue that He chose to include it in these foundational commands. That’s because our belongings impact our being. By protecting our property, God is protecting those things we need to survive.

Our age of plenty deceives us into thinking that theft is no big deal. In our mental economy, we can continue to take and take and take with little impact on our neighbor. There’s plenty where that came from and more than enough to go around. What difference does it make if we cut some corners or exaggerate the numbers? The eighth command, however, reminds us that everything we’ve been given comes to us from God’s hands. He’s the One who gives us – and the people around us – the things we need to survive. Knowing the Giver makes it harder for us to simply be takers.

### IN THE WORD:

Exodus 20:15/Deuteronomy 5:19: **“You must not steal.”**

We live in a time of abundance. Our pantries are full of food, our closets are full of clothes, and our homes are filled with stuff. Scientists estimate that the average American home contains somewhere around 300,000 items! Amazon has created a river of stuff that flows directly to our front doors, drowning our homes in everything we could ever want! We live in a time of unprecedented possessions. The scale of our belongings has left us with very little to be longing for.

Yet, the fact that we have can have everything we want has blinded us to the reality of what we really need. We need food and water. We need clothes. We need shelter. Though these things are relatively easy to come by in our day and age, they haven’t always been. Many of those who lived in biblical times knew the struggle of trying to scrape by. The vast majority of people in those cultures were day-laborers. If they went a day without work, it was a day without food. When you live like that, any act of theft can be devastating. A corrupt employer or a dishonest coworker could put your very life in jeopardy.

The eighth commandment, then, speaks to our most basic necessities. It protects the things we need to survive. The Old Testament Law went to great pains to make sure this commandment was followed in every arena of life. It protected property rights (Ex. 23:4-5), established terms

for restitution and repayment (Num. 5:5-7), and prohibited the charging of interest on a loan (Ex. 22:25-27). God wanted to ensure that all His people would have everything they needed. When we steal from another person, we are stripping away their dignity and agency. We're taking away the things they need to survive. More importantly, we're intercepting God's provision for their life. The Bible is clear on the fact that God owns everything (Psalm 24:1). He's the One who distributes all things. Provision is His prerogative. Stealing is more than just taking from our neighbor; it is an attempt to take the place of God. When we steal, we're saying we don't trust the way He runs things or the ways He chooses to distribute what He already owns.

Does it surprise you that one of the commandments deals with property rights? Why or why not? What does this say about God's desire to provide for us? How is this commandment ultimately an issue of stewardship and ownership?

Our culture of plenty often hides the true cost of stealing. In what ways does violating this command cost our neighbor? How does the cost of stealing affect us all? What happens when a community or society loses sight of this command?

What are some of the subtle ways we violate this command? How do we steal time, ideas, information, etc.? What are some excuses we use to justify this? How do these excuses fall apart when we consider God's ownership of all things?

### **IN THE WORLD:**

Alan Redpath: *"This commandment is...broken in failure to make a total consecration and commitment of our lives to Him... He wants your brain to think through, your hands to work through, your feet to run and walk for Him, your heart to radiate His love. He wants the talents and gifts you possess, for they are His. They belong to Him because He created you and them. To hold those talents to yourself He regards as stealing... The cross is God's great plea...as you realize you are bought. The Lord does not say He has 'kept' you or 'made' you but that He has 'bought' you."*

Our culture often insulates us from the true cost of stealing. While there aren't too many of us who would blatantly shoplift from a store, we've invented all kinds of ways to silently steal from the people around us. We waste time at work and steal productivity from our employer. We underpay employees to help increase our bottom line. We find clever ways to report our income so we can avoid paying so much in taxes. We might never rob a bank, but we're pretty adept at finding ways to take from one another.

The New Testament, however, reminds us that God's commands about property aren't just about stealing. Rather than taking from other people, the Gospel invites us to give. Whereas stealing is driven by an attitude of greed, Jesus calls us to a spirit of generosity. Our lives aren't measured in how much stuff we acquire. Neither is our value found in the amount of money in

our bank account. Ultimately, life is not about how much we get, but how much we give. Our stuff will either accumulate in our closets or it will accelerate Christ's Kingdom. When we practice generosity, we tell the world that everything we have – including ourselves – belongs to Him!

**Ephesians 4:28: “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.”**

The Gospel tells us that we were bought at a price. What price was God willing to pay for us? What does that say about how valuable we are to Him? How are we “stealing” from Him when we withhold ourselves?

How does generosity serve as the antidote to our culture of greed and accumulation? How does it break money's hold on our hearts? In what ways does generosity help reflect the Gospel?

Read Matthew 6:19-21. Why are we so tempted to store up treasures on earth? What ultimately happens to the things we accumulate here? What happens to the treasures we use for His Kingdom? What difference does our generosity ultimately make?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was your biggest takeaway from the video teaching time? Why do you think this commandment was included among the Ten? What does it have to say about the ways we view money and possessions?
2. Read Exodus 20:15 and Deuteronomy 5:19. What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘stealing’? What are some of the seemingly small ways we steal today? How can these small acts have a huge impact? How do we all feel the effects of theft?
3. Why is it that our hearts and habits are so driven by accumulation? Why do we want to get as much as possible – even if it comes at the expense of our neighbor? How is the violation of this command a distrust of God's provision?
4. How is generosity both the antithesis and the antidote to the eighth commandment? How does it motivate us to see our lives as more than just our money and possessions? How does generosity paint a living, breathing example of the Gospel? In what ways does generosity remind us of who our stuff – and our lives – belongs to?
5. Read Matthew 6:19-21. What does Jesus mean when He tells us to store up “treasures in heaven”? How do these treasures compare to treasures on earth? What's one practical step you need to make to change how you view the nature of true treasure?

## Commandment Nine: LIVE NOT BY LIES

David Gill: *“Lies create an internal contradiction that destroys personal integrity and wholeness; you know the truth but say otherwise.”*

The truth can be a tricky thing to pin down. In our culture of half-truths and “your truth,” trying to discern the whole truth can feel a bit like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall. For as much as we’re tempted to take liberties with the truth, nearly everyone recognizes its importance. No one wants to come to the end of their days only to discover that they devoted themselves to a lie. We want to know that what we’ve built with our lives stands on the bedrock of reality. We want to know what’s really real and what’s truly true. If recent times have taught us anything, it’s that we erode the truth to our own ruin.

The ninth commandment reminds us that a culture built on lies is bound to crumble. Lying about your neighbors makes for a lousy neighborhood. It’s hard to live in community when everyone disagrees about what’s true. Communities only function – relationships only flourish – with a shared vision of reality and a common perception of the good. As Jesus will later remind us, lies are more than simple distortions of the truth; they are the very language and currency of the Enemy. In the end, we will either live by truth or die by lies.

### **IN THE WORD:**

Words have power.

Sure, we may say that it’s only sticks and stones that can break our bones, but we all know that words have the power to shatter our souls. Words can cut. Words can sting. Words can destroy. They may not be able to physically kill someone, but they can murder reputations, damage families, and wound relationships. Wielded incorrectly, words can be more destructive than the sharpest blade. Because of this, the ninth commandment seeks to mitigate some of the harm they can do:

Exodus 20:16/Deuteronomy 5:20: **“You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.”**

This command is about more than just lies. It’s about how we use those lies to hurt the people around us. The commandment cautions us against utilizing misinformation and disinformation to have a negative impact on our neighbors. You see, lies almost always come with a cost. Most of the time, we try to push that cost onto someone else. We lie so that we look good at the expense of others. So often, our attempts to bend the truth are motivated by a desire to break someone else.

We manipulate words in order to manipulate people. We conceal the truth to hide our own intentions and inadequacies. Some of us have even learned how to lie without saying a word, letting our silence do the talking. We always lie with a purpose. We’re either trying to puff ourselves up or knock someone else down.

Yet, lies have a cost that extend beyond our neighbor; they also affect our neighborhoods. Lies have a way of eroding the trust within a community. We can't live in harmony with each other if we can't believe one another. We can't begin to work on solutions without a shared view of the problems. Lies are the termites of a society. Once they get into the beams, it's just a matter of time before the whole thing falls apart. The ninth commandment reminds us that truth forms the trusses that hold our communities together.

How have words changed your life? What are some positive things people have said to you that set your life on a different course? What were some negative things people have said that had an impact on you? How have these changed the way you use words?

What are some situations when you are tempted to lie? Are you more tempted to lie to make yourself look better or to make others look worse? Why do we so often use lies at the expense of other people?

What are some of the costs of lies? How can they affect a family? How can they impact society? What is the highest price you've seen an individual/group pay for a lie? Why do we try to convince ourselves that a lie is going to be worth the potential cost?

### **IN THE WORLD:**

*John Dickson: "Think for a moment about why we lie in normal circumstances and what it says about us and about those we deceive. Most lies seem to be about deriving an invalid benefit for myself, perhaps to protect my honour, to maintain a boast, to avoid punishment, to win an argument, to rip someone off, and so on. A lie tends to belittle the deceived. It commoditizes them for my benefit."*

The Bible opens by telling us about the power of God's words. God speaks and things happen. He talks and light comes into existence. He says a word and the cosmos starts to spin. At His command, everything we see comes into being. Most everything in this Creation was made through God's speech. His words have the power of life and light.

When the apostle John looked back at the beginning of all things, he saw Jesus in those creative words: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."** It's not just that Jesus' words bring creation into existence. They also continually sustain and maintain everything we see (Hebrews 1:3). To this day, He speaks and life happens.

Contrast that with the speech of our Enemy. In John 8:44, Jesus told us that Satan, **"...was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."** Satan can only speak

in lies. The truth is a foreign language for him. Thus, his words can never bring life. They only end in murder and death.

Whenever we speak, we have to decide what language we want to use. Are we going to speak like our Father? Or, are we going to speak like our Enemy? Will we speak constructive and life-giving words? Or, will we speak words that only bring destruction? The words we say will either bear witness to the truth or lead us down the path of lies.

What do God's words accomplish? What words has He spoken to us – both through His Son and through Scripture? How should this affect the words we say to one another? How does Jesus (and His Word) change our speech to one another?

How does knowing that Satan speaks in lies reframe how you see lying? What are some of the lies Satan tries to convince us of? How are these lies deceptive? How do they lead away from life? In what ways do our lies do the exact same thing?

Read James 3:1-12. What does this passage say about the words we speak to one another? What power is there in our words? What are some practical ways we can make sure our words are edifying and life-giving?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was your biggest takeaway from the video teaching time? How do we see this commandment violated today? Why is it so important for us to be people of truth in a culture of misinformation/disinformation?
2. Read Exodus 20:16 and Deuteronomy 5:20. Why is false testimony so dangerous? How can it affect a person's life? How can it affect a community? What's at stake here? What happens to a people/society who don't follow this command?
3. Why do words have such power? What are some examples of words that have done great things – for good or for bad? How have you experienced the power of words in your own life? Are there words you wish you could get back?
4. In your personal reflection, you were asked to think about some of the situations in which we lie. What are some reasons why we lie? Are most of these reasons selfish? What are some ways we expect lies to benefit us? How does this ultimately backfire?
5. What are some practical ways we can be sure that we're speaking words of life and truth? How do we make sure the words we share on social media are the same? Read Philippians 4:8. How do we speak words that contain the qualities Paul mentions here?

## Commandment Ten: ERASING YOUR NEIGHBOR

John Dickson: *"[The tenth commandment] probes beyond the external performance of my actions to the inner workings of my soul. It asks: What is my heart really set on? Outwardly, someone could appear highly ethical but beneath the surface there is a sea of craving and resentment toward others. The tenth commandment zeros in on such resentments and passions and calls on us to develop not just external morality but inward virtue."*

Most of the Ten Commandments deal with external behaviors and habits. They are easily observable and visually certifiable. You can tell if someone has built an idol and set it up in their home. It's hard to argue that you've kept the Sabbath if your hands are dirty from working in the fields. Likewise, most acts of murder, theft, and lying leave some physical evidence behind, proof that the commandment has been violated. It's not that difficult for us to justify ourselves when it comes to our external and visible acts of obedience.

The tenth commandment, on the other hand, asks us to go deeper than the surface level. Even if we could master the externals, the prohibition against coveting would still cut straight to our hearts. Coveting isn't about what we do or how we act; it's about what we want. What's our motivation? What are we really chasing after? Living the good life isn't about checking off boxes and avoiding the wrong things. It's about loving the right things and living with properly ordered desires. True transformation can only happen from the inside out.

### IN THE WORD:

The first commandment gave us a broad command that cut straight to the heart of the issue: **"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."** This reminder of our ultimate allegiance set the stage for the commandments to follow. If God is our first priority and greatest love, then we will delight in guarding His name, honoring His Sabbath, and enriching the lives of those created in His image. The first commandment prepares us for the ones to follow.

In much the same way, the tenth commandment asks us to reflect back on the commands we've just read. It may sound easy to avoid things like murder, stealing, and adultery. But the final commandment asks us to go back and think about the attitudes that lead to the action. The violation of God's commands begins in a heart that's set on the wrong things:

Exodus 20:17: **"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."**

Deuteronomy 5:21: **"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."**

The word for 'covet' is tied to the idea of lust. When we covet another person's stuff, we lust after the life they have. We want their possessions, we want their relationships, we want their happiness. The variation between the command in Exodus and the one in Deuteronomy shows us how dominating this kind of lust can be. The passage in Deuteronomy adds a prohibition against coveting your neighbor's house, a fitting warning for people about to enter the Promised Land. A permanent home should have been an occasion for gratitude. Instead, it would only provide another opportunity for dissatisfaction.

The sin of coveting is an issue of comparison. We're effectively saying that what God has given us is not enough. We want the things He's given to someone else, as well. The act of coveting, therefore, is the ultimate act of erasure. We erase our memory of the good gifts God has given to us in pursuit of the gifts He's given to another. Worse, our imaginations erase our neighbor from existence, removing them from the picture so we can take what they own for ourselves.

How does the tenth commandment help us reframe and rethink the commandments that have come before? How does keeping the command against coveting help us in how we think about (and keep!) the other commands in this list?

Coveting is a matter of comparison. What are some areas where you are tempted to compare yourself to others and covet what they have? How does covetousness affect our level of gratitude? How does it affect our level of generosity?

How does coveting change the way we view our neighbor? How can it be destructive to our relationships? How can it affect a community? If we're always chasing after newer and better stuff, how does that keep us from loving our neighbor?

### **IN THE WORLD:**

"I would be happy if..."

How would you finish that sentence? What is that one thing you need in order to be happy? For some, it's something financial – more money or more possessions. For others, they're waiting for a relationship to will make their life complete. Still others long for status, another degree or job promotion that will make them feel like they've finally arrived. We're all chasing that "one more thing" we think will finally satisfy us.

In our world of non-stop commercials, it's hard to avoid covetousness. We're bombarded by advertisements and influencers telling us the new thing we have to have. Social media makes it easy to compare our life with the lives of people around us. There are so many daily reminders of the stuff we don't have that it makes us resent the things we do have. It's easy for us to feel disillusioned or discontented with life when we're constantly being reminded of what we lack.

Though coveting doesn't seem like a big deal to us, the final commandment reminds us how poisonous it can be. Coveting can rob us of contentment, pulling our focus onto the life we wish we had. Coveting smothers gratitude, stealing our joy for the gifts we've been given. In the end, coveting can even kill relationships, forcing us to prioritize possessions over people. In the end, our covetousness distracts us from the God who is the source of everything we have – the God to whom we will one day have to give account for the life He gave us.

**1 Timothy 6:6-7: “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.”**

“I would be happy if...” How would you finish that sentence? What is it that makes you think you need this thing/relationship/etc.? How can you tell if something is a God-given desire or if it's something you just want for selfish reasons?

How do you see covetousness in our culture today? How does the media/social media lead us into wanting a life other than the one we have? What are some practices that can help you foster a greater sense of gratitude and contentment?

Read Ecclesiastes 5:10-12. How does this passage caution us against covetousness? Why does coveting never bring us satisfaction? Why can we never find satisfaction? How does our longing for stuff point us toward our ultimate longing for God?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What was your biggest takeaway from the video teaching time? Why is the sin of coveting such a big deal? How does it strike at the heart of the other commandments? How does following this command help us love our neighbor?
2. Read Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21. What are the specific things this command tells us not to covet? How do people covet after these same things today? How can coveting erode trust and relationship in a community?
3. In the personal reflection time, you were asked to complete this sentence: “I would be happy if...” How did you finish that question? What do you think drives this desire in your heart? How do we tell God-given desires from selfish ones?
4. How are gratitude and contentment the antidotes to the problem of covetousness? How do they help us find satisfaction in the life that God has already given us? How do we, as Christians, model contentment in a culture built on coveting?
5. Read Exodus 20:18-20. What happened when God finished speaking these commands to the people? How did they react? What does this show us about the holiness and power of God? How should our response be similar/different when we read these commands?