

Digging Deep 2020-2021 Study
The Ten Commandments

by Cindy Colley

For Jennifer Benavides, who has, for the past ten years, given faithfully and selflessly of time and creative talents to insure that the voice of Digging Deep makes its way around the world to those who women who love the Word. She is a faithful mom, daughter, elder's wife and friend. For all things tech, Jennifer, thank you.

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Foreword

Before the Mountain...

God was reminding His children of Who had brought this trembling people to the quaking smoke-covered mountain and so “all these words” in Exodus 20 begin with “I am.” He was. He is. He will be. The great I AM.

And His most recent display of glory, for them, was their over-and-over-again-miraculous delivery from the bondage of Egypt. He could have just picked them up and sat them down beside this mountain, but the bloody Nile, the frogs and flies and snakes and deaths, a congealed Red Sea that came crashing in on the army of Pharaoh...all of that surely was to teach them and the nations around them that this was a holy work and that this nation was a sanctified people.

We know that the quaking mountain, the trumpet, and the smoke was really all about a baby in Bethlehem and a cross in nearby Jerusalem that would finally be the miraculous delivery from the worst kind of bondage. It would be a holy work for our sanctification.

God was in those thunderings and, with the work of His finger on tables of stone, He was about to change the world and cultures and legal systems for centuries to come. Have you ever thought about the fact that the body of Jesus the Lord, who was later to be accused of defiling the Sabbath, was resting on that very first Sabbath as He looked on the work of the first six days of that entity called *time* that's really only for those of us who are in the brief flash of an earthly testing moment that we call *life*? Have you thought about the fact that He already had a plan for his physical body to temporarily rest on another Sabbath after His lowly entrance into our world through a human birth canal? That flesh would rest after His own testing and triumph over evil and his glorification as he was lifted for our sins? He knew all about all of this, already. He knew about the darkness on the Golgotha hillside outside of Jerusalem way back there when He was thundering on the dark mountain at Sinai. He knew about the final holy Sabbath when he wrote the words “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” And He already knew about the tomb in which His own flesh would take that final Sabbath rest. He knew that He would walk away from that tomb and that mortals would hear the words. “He is not here, for He is risen.” And those words following that last Sabbath rest would make all the difference for you and me. He already knew. He chose.

Nothing about the mountain was accidental. On that day at Sinai, the people saw the thunderings and lightnings and the mountain smoking and they stood afar off and trembled.

And on that other day, there was darkness from the sixth hour, and the earth quaked and the rocks were torn and bodies came forth from graves. The veil of the temple was torn. Even the soldiers and the one who pierced Him, observing the quaking and the darkness, said “Truly this was the Son of God.” Nothing was accidental about this mountain, either.

“It is finished.” He came not to destroy (thwart the purposes of) the law, but to reach the law’s grand and driving cause of redemption. That’s why we call it a *scheme* of redemption. It was purposefully executed from before the foundation of the world. The Captain of our salvation was working already, at Sinai, and He accomplished His most difficult work at Calvary. He finished the work and then He rested.

When the Lord says “Hear O Israel”, may the Israel of the Lord listen.

Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? (2 Corinthians 3:7-8)

Month One: *Apartness and Muchness*

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Humanity, in our postmodern world, hates law. We are living in an era in which humankind, by and large, has an aversion to rigid law and an affinity for regulation fluidity. We don't care for hard and fast rules, but, rather, we love the idea of evolving truth. We (...we, in the general sense) are offended by the notion that there could be any absolute standard of conduct and we gravitate to the idea of open-mindedness about changing and varying standards of behavior. In fact, we have, in our righteous quest to forever abolish American slavery, become averse to any slavery at all...even the bondage of men to righteousness; and the very word "command" has an antiquated and obtuse ring in our postmodern ears. "After all, who would presume to think he could tell me what to do?"

1. Read Romans 6, 1 Peter 2 and Colossians 3 and highlight the verses that tell us that we, as Christians, are slaves, regardless of our working status in the community. Let's establish that we cannot believe the New Covenant without a recognition that we are subject to commands. We are slaves. Let's allow this to be the pretext to this year's study.
2. While we will cover this more fully in a later chapter, for now, let's be sure we see that the Mosaic law, containing the ten commandments, is, thankfully, not the law under which Christians operate. Remembering that, in the context of this reading, *law* is the law of Moses and *faith* is the gospel or law of Christ, read the book of Galatians and answer the following as you read, including verse citations. (Some may have more than one citation.)
 - a. Law or Faith? By which are we justified today?
 - b. To which should we be dead?
 - c. Which makes us alive?
 - d. Which brings or yields righteousness?
 - e. Which brought the Spirit and miracles to the Galatians ?
 - f. Which makes children of Abraham today?
 - g. Which justifies the Gentiles?
 - h. Which brings the blessing with Abraham?
 - i. Which has a curse?
 - j. From which are we redeemed?
 - k. Through which did the blessing come on the Gentiles?

l. Which was first added because of transgression?

m. Which was in effect till the seed came?

n. Which gives us promise?

o. Which kept men in ward?

p. Which was revealed later?

q. Which was a tutor?

r. Which makes us children?

s. Under which was Jesus born?

t. Which allows redemption and adoption?

u. Which makes us heirs?

v. Which is like Hagar?

w. Which is like Sarai?

x. Which is a yoke of bondage?

y. Which demanded circumcision?

z. Adherence to which makes me fall from grace?

aa. Which works through love?

bb. Which did Paul preach?

cc. Which makes new creatures?

dd. Which is the Israel of God?

3. Romans 15:4 tells us why the Old Law was codified and preserved for our study. Explain that reason in your own words. Let's also, just for now, say that this first command is articulated by the Holy Spirit in many ways in the New Covenant, our law. It goes without even saying, but note three New Testament commandment passages that assure us that our devotion to the one God is mandated.

4. Read the great narrative of Exodus 1-12. Below is a partial list of the gods worshipped in Egypt during the life of Moses. As you read about the plagues, notice which plagues might have been specific affronts to which gods. (This is a very interesting study. It might be review for some who have done previous Digging Deep studies. Review is greatly beneficial, though!) Then find a verse in chapter twelve that shows that God was indeed demonstrating that He was unlike any other god and that the culmination of the plagues was also a completion of His execution of judgment on the impotent gods of Egypt. Write that verse below your list:

Apis—bull god; god of the Nile
Hathor—sky goddess
Heqiet—a goddess who attended at childbirth; had a frog head
Horus—a sun god
Isis—goddess of the Nile or healing goddess
Khnum—ram god, Nile guardian
Min—a reproduction god
Nut—a sky goddess
Osirus—god of crops and fertility
Re—a sun god
Set—god of storms
Sekhmet—goddess over diseases
Sunu—goddess over pestilence
Uatchit—possibly represented in the common fly

5. Choose one of the above gods/goddesses to research and write a paragraph about the beliefs surrounding the god in ancient Egyptian times.
6. Understanding the power of environment, continue the Exodus reading through chapter 15. From chapter 15:1-19, make a list of things Jehovah did in the exodus that demonstrated supreme power. Why was it vitally important that these former slaves get a good understanding of the chasm between the impotence of the list of gods above and the omnipotence of Jehovah at this pre-law juncture in their history? Great discussion for groups.
7. At this point, let's take the time to define idolatry. It's taking the allegiance that inherently belongs to God and giving it to someone or something else. Take a week and watch for this occurrence of misplaced allegiance in your family/community and the world around you. As you see this happening, note the *idols* you see here:
8. Write Exodus 15:11. Memorize this verse. Remembering it, when temptation comes throughout your lifetime, will be a catalyst for your spiritual development.
9. In studying verse 11, the phrase *majestic in holiness* or *glorious in holiness* literally signifies God's *apartness*. The Hebrew word is also used in a command given to Israel in Leviticus 20:7. Use your lexicon to find this word for *holiness* or *sanctify*. Below, list five attributes of God that are *apart* from any other god. (My list begins with power [God is *apart* in power.]; but these attributes are many.) When you have listed five, comment on how each of the five

you have listed should, in the very realization that I serve an *apart* God. make me *apart* from the world which serves the idols we listed in #7. I'll get you started. We're going for one attribute of God and one way that this particular attribute separates me, in a practical way, from the world. Following your five attributes/applications, write out I Peter 1:14-16.

God is apart in His power (No god can do what He can do.)—This should make me pray with faith that He will find a way for me to overcome any obstacle to serving Him in this short life (I Corinthians 10:13). He can orchestrate myriads and multiple events and circumstances to make them work out for what is ultimately best for me, His child (Romans 8:28). This kind of praying sets me apart from the world, at large. The world cannot pray like this.

10. In this vein of *apartness*, read Deuteronomy 26 (near the conclusion of the re-giving of the law). How is it stated, in the last few verses of this chapter, that it is command-keeping that sets God's Israel apart as a *peculiar* (KJV) or *special* (KJV) people or a *treasured possession* (ESV)? Which rendering of that Hebrew word do you like best and why?
11. It is at this point that we must look at Deuteronomy 6:4-6. (Deuteronomy 5 contains the re-giving of the ten commandments. Read that chapter now.) Deuteronomy six, then, gives the required response, for Israel, to the law of Moses. We cannot but notice the completeness of allegiance to Jehovah that must be given to the *apart* God. Since He is *apart*, he demands that my whole existence is *apart* or exclusively for Him. Write here Deuteronomy 6:5:
12. Although the words *heart* and *soul* are synonyms, it seems that loving God with our whole hearts, indicates that our emotions and will, passions and desires are 100% wrapped up in His will for us. We exhibit undivided allegiance in our desires (what we want). Read the following verses from Deuteronomy, containing this Hebrew word for *heart*, and notice, from them, that God does not want any place in your seat of will and decision-making to be reserved for any other allegiance. Remember He wants every crevice of this will. Write the phrase from each verse that underscores this 100% given-over seat of will.
 - a. Deuteronomy 5:28-31
 - b. Deuteronomy 7:16-18
 - c. Deuteronomy 8:14-19 (the word is in this passage a couple times)
 - d. Deuteronomy 13:1-3
 - e. Deuteronomy 17:20
 - f. Deuteronomy 29:18-20
13. Deuteronomy 30 is a real *heart to heart to heart* chapter. Read it and highlight each use of the word heart. Make any notes about the "all-in" required nature of our hearts.

14. Loving Him with all (100%) of our *souls* is very similar to loving Him with all of our hearts. For our purposes, in this lesson, let's distinguish them by thinking about our hearts as that about which we are passionate. Let's think, then, about our souls as actually being our physical lives. (Often the word translated *soul*, in Deuteronomy 6:5, is translated *life* or even *creature* or *body*.) In our usage, it's our physical and spiritual breath. I'm not sure that this is always an exact distinction in every case of scripture, but I do not think it does any injustice to the overall meaning of the text. Our hearts, and souls, in this context, are the essence of us, including both our passions and our bodies, and reaching to our decisions for the whole of our lifetimes.

- Read Leviticus 26 and answer: Can our souls abhor things? Should we abhor some things in our very beings? Does God abhor things in His soul? What things?
- In Joshua 23:11-12, the word *nepes* (soul in Deuteronomy 6:5) is translated *yourselves* in the KJV. Find the word in your translation. What are we to be careful to maintain about our souls from this context?
- Judges 10 gives an account of the *soul* of God being grieved because of the divided allegiance of His people. Read the chapter and highlight that verse. How can we check our own souls and be sure that they grieve when our allegiance has become divided. How do we recognize divided allegiance? Good discussion.
- (In 1 Samuel 2, this Hebrew word, *nepes*, is likely translated *heart* in your Bible.) Find it and note it. Whose heart/soul would grieve here because of a divided allegiance? Has your soul (your whole life and being) ever been grieved because of your own divided allegiance or that of your children? Note that here.
- I love the idea of *setting* or *applying* or *appointing* our souls to a purpose. To what purpose can our souls be set in I Chronicles 22:19? How is this like setting a spiritual GPS to search for a destination?
- Can you put your soul in a covenant with God? Who did this in 2 Chronicles 34:31. How is the Hebrew word for *soul* in our Deuteronomy 6 text (*nepes*) translated there?
- In Psalm 19:7, what is it that has the power to change souls (lives, directions of purpose)? In Psalm 41:4, Who has the power to heal souls (to make one again of divided allegiances)?
- Read Psalm 49. What has divided the soul's allegiance here? In which of the commandments would this concept of divided allegiance be specifically prohibited? Find the word *nepes* three times in this reading.

15. Loving God with all of our might is the next command of Deuteronomy 6:5. *Might* is the Hebrew word *meod*, meaning *muchness*. It's usually translated *very*. We are to love Him powerfully, mightily, vehemently and with exceeding force. This is the characteristic that forces everyone around us to see that we are in love with Jehovah God—because we love Him so *much*! He is the focus of our lives' force. This characteristic of our love is what is seen by others. While we do not act to be seen of men (Matthew 6), those who spend time with people who love God cannot help but notice the excessive devotion and the force of diligence that drives us. The word for *mighty* is often translated *greatly*, *exceedingly*, or *sore*. It definitely has to do with degree. It's about how much we love God, in this context, but it obviously follows that forcefulness is the result of loving Him much. Find the Hebrew word in the following places. To what does it refer in these passages?

Psalm 119:4
Psalm 119:167
Zechariah 9:9

Think of the most spiritually forceful person you personally know. (I understand this kind of thinking is relative to relationships, but I still think it helps us be practical.) What kinds of “excessive” activities or devotions characterize this person’s life because he/she loves Him much? Make a list:

16. This point is the bottom line of Month one: **Every one of the ten commandments would have been kept perfectly by an Israelite IF one kept the first commandment perfectly. Conversely, if one was not obeying commands 2-10, one was not honoring God above all other gods. This first commandment is the guardian of God’s entire system of religion and morality. It is the commitment before the command-keeping.** Make a list below of commands 2-10 and contemplate how the breaking of any one of them would also violate this, the first command.
17. Also from our study of heart, soul and might, consider this: The first command does not indicate that God’s people were to look to deity as a “pecking order”...that is, that Jehovah was at the apex, over a hierarchy of gods that were allowed their rightful places. The phrase *before me* does not mean *in priority to me*. It means *before my face* or *in my presence*. The first command excluded any appearance of any god (small *g*) in the lives of the people of Jehovah. It was a strong declaration of monotheism, a decree of exclusivity and an ultimatum of all-or-nothing allegiance. It seems that after the plagues, the Red Sea, the provisions in the wilderness and the smoking mountain, they would have caught on to this. How do we know that Israel needed this decree at this time? How do we know that we still need this command? Good group discussion.

Practical Application:

Purchase Hannah’s Hundred Volume 2 from www.thecolleyhouse.org and listen to it three times a week this month. When you have done that, you will likely be able to sing all of the plagues and all of the ten commandments. (It might be a redundant and elementary “listen”, but that’s how I know these twenty verses.)

OR

Read Proverbs 6 and make a list of the seven things listed there which are hated by God. Place this list in a location where you will see it every day and pray weekly this month that your heart/life will be purged by your diligence and His strength from each of these things that are an abomination to God.

Resources:

Mohler, R. Albert, Jr.; Words from the Fire; Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL; 2009; pp. 29-30, 37-39

Strong’s Hebrew Lexicon; Olive Tree Online Version

Zondervan Academic Blog; <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/what-the-bible-tells-us-about-the-10-plagues-of-egypt>

Chapter 2: Idolatry: You Get to Be the Boss

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...

Recently I went for a rare treat to get my nails done at a salon near my home. The technicians, as seems frequently to be the case in our area, were speaking in Chinese. I could not understand any portion of their conversations with each other. As the time went by though, I began to notice some items in the environment which I did recognize. The salon owner was wearing a beautiful necklace. I asked her about it and she explained that it was a sacred Buddhist symbol. As I sat waiting for my nails to dry, I noticed I was sitting next to a large statue of Buddha that was being displayed in the window. I thought about the fact that I had a choice about whether or not to have my nails done in the first place and about which salon to patronize, if I were going to patronize at all. I began to think about the fact that there were likely other salons operated by people who are not Christians or who may even have antagonistic feelings about our Lord's people. But I did not, at the time, know of another salon in our area that so publicly advertised allegiance to a false god. I began to think about how the dollars I was spending today were supporting the public display of idolatry. I determined not to return to this salon and I have not been back.

When I was a child, I always thought the second commandment was a little redundant. I thought, in my seven-year-old mind "Why would God command them not to make false gods when He just said not to put any other gods before Him? God must have really wanted them to understand the sinfulness of idolatry." Now, as I look at the decalogue, I see these two commandments as being vastly different and equally necessary to a people exiting a land of pagan images.

As we noted last month, the first command was a permanent declaration of the sinfulness of elevating any being or thing to a level that was worship-worthy in one's mind. Thus, the first commandment shouted the monotheistic nature of the Jewish and, later, the Christian system. In eight words of fewer than seven letters, God succinctly drew a forever-fence around deity. He did not want to see anything recognized as a divine being, ever, in His presence or among His people. I can only imagine the insult that the recognition of an impotent, lifeless—even imaginary—god would be to the Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer of life. Why that would be like my biological child declaring that her doll (that I had sewn and painted for her) had actually given birth to her and that she would always be grateful to her doll for that!...only a thousand-plus times more incredulous. So God succinctly and clearly declared Himself as the only God.

But the second command was followed by detail. It was not merely a prohibition of the *worship* of false gods. That had just been said. The second command was the prohibition of even *crafting* images or likenesses of nature's objects. Its details are in stark contrast to the previous command.

Every so often, even in our postmodern American world, the sin of image idolatry rears its head, literally. I mean the head (or the whole body) of Buddha or of a sacred cow in India or of a Hindu deity or, particularly in the broad world of christendom, a Catholic "saint" or a supposed likeness of the Madonna. In fact, Roman Catholics today number the commandments differently than we do in this study. The first commandment, to Catholics, is "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" with the second, in their accounting, being "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord

Thy God in vain.” The second command, about not making any graven image, is downplayed as being merely a portion of the first command. They contend that it has never been sinful to carve an image for religious purposes. They would say that the sin related to images of saints would not even be in bowing to them, but rather in worshipping them as God.

So, let’s examine the second commandment and see if we can discern exactly what it proscribed and what that prohibition means, if anything, for us today. Was it something about idolatry that was additional to the first commandment? If so, is there an application for us today?

1. Read Exodus chapters 16-20. List every instance in which God showed, in these five chapters, His provision or His power. These people should have been convinced way before Sinai about the infinite God they were serving.
2. Once again, all of the words consist of fewer than seven letters and we can know what each word means: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven (or carved) image.” But even if we couldn’t understand, there’s Leviticus 26:1. Write it here:
3. There’s also Deuteronomy 5:8,9. Write these verses here:
4. Now read Deuteronomy 4 and highlight similar prohibitions from this chapter:
5. For an apt account of the sin upon sin that occurs when a person lives as if there’s no second commandment, read Judges 17. List the progression of evil below. If you still have your “Women of Troubled Times” book from a previous study, there’s a chapter containing practical applications from Judges 17. You may optionally want to look at that.
6. Now skip to chapter 23 of Exodus and begin reading. For each of the following chapters note why the passage could be entitled as follows. Note any additional titles you might make for the passages if you were entitling them:

Chapter 23—A Jealous God:

Chapter 24—A Glorious God

Chapter 25-27—A Precise God

Chapter 28—A Holy God

Chapter 29, 30—A Sanctifying God

Chapter 31—A Covenantal God

7. As God was revealing Himself mercifully to the children of Israel, writing with His own finger (31:18) for their eternal benefit, they were already doing the unthinkable. As He was commanding them (23:13) to never even let the name of a false god pass through their lips,

they were erecting one, along with an altar before it. Read chapter 32 now and ponder the presumption (“on-purpose-ness”) of this serious sin.

The people verbalized the request for graven _____.

They had to break off _____.

They had to pack them up and deliver them to _____.

Aaron had to find a graving _____. Surely these instruments were not just everywhere, since they were not supposed to be making images and they did not yet have the commands for tabernacle building.

Someone had to build a _____ for melting.

Aaron had to suit up for work in extreme _____ and with melted _____.

Aaron built an _____ in front of the calf.

Aaron proclaimed a _____ day, mixing worship to God with obeisance to an _____.

They butchered the animal to offer to the _____. They got up _____ to do this.

They transported various peace _____.

Some of the people provided large amounts of food and _____.

They had a large scale and almost certainly riotous _____, no doubt similar to what they had witnessed as slaves in _____.

They made great noise by _____ and Joshua heard them.

They _____, likely to music, in revelry. This kind of celebrating takes a lot of energy (and presumption!).

_____ lied about the origin of the calf.

The people who were pre-breaking the command did so with vigor and purpose.

8. When one examines this list, it’s hard not to think about Psalm 19:13. Is it any wonder that the sins of Judges 17 and of Exodus 32 displayed a snowball effect? Define *presumptuous* from Strong’s or your Hebrew lexicon and then define *dominion* from Psalm 19:13.

9. What is discussed in verses seven through eleven as the psalmist begins his prayer in Psalm 19? Is this description in Psalm 19 true about the ten commandments? Write any notes here:
10. The second commandment was a strict prohibition of the crafting or carving of any likeness of what things? What things in the world of nature (that they could see) were included in the prohibition? What else was prohibited from contact with a carving tool according to a later verse in Exodus 20?
11. Just in case the Israelites tripped up on an image (say, one that Aaron had made, for instance), any faithful Israelites were told to refuse to bow to such an image. Who “tripped up” on one in Daniel 3? Read that passage, in which there was unflinching obedience to the second commandment and note the verse that compares Jehovah with the current gods of the day.
12. Now let’s notice six obvious immutable facts about graven images and, in turn, contrast the nature of idols with Jehovah.

- a. They do not move and/or lead people. People move them. (Read Isaiah 46 and verify this truth.)

Find a Biblical example of God moving or leading people.

- b. They do not maintain people. People maintain them. Read 1 Samuel 5 and make notes to verify this.

God is the One who sustains us. Verify from at least one passage of scripture.

- c. They do not see or hear or speak. They are merely seen. Read 1 Kings 18 and verify by citing verses.

God sees, hears and speaks. Find Biblical references about his doing all three of these things.

- d. Idols do not make. They are made. Verify this from Isaiah 44.

God is the Creator of all. Give a citation for this truth.

- e. Idols do not control. They are controlled. Read Psalm 115 and note this.

God reigns supreme over all peoples of the earth. Verify from scripture.

- f. Idols are fully physically formed and emphasize the visual, but have no spirit. Verify their visual aspect from Acts 17.

Verify from scripture that God is not seen of man and that He is spirit.

13. Read Isaiah 45 and list the wonderful works/attributes of God listed there. Write also the end, as described here, of those who make idols or graven images.
14. Finally, think about the Israelites at the base of Sinai. It seems that they were worshiping God *and* building a graven image, simultaneously. They were encamped at a smoking mountain to which God had led them via many miracles, and while they waited for God, they built their own fire below and credited an inanimate object for their mighty deliverance from Egypt. **They may have been outwardly claiming to be the people of Jehovah, but were they following the first commandment, at this time? If the first commandment is followed, does that guarantee obedience to the second? How so?**
15. While I was working on this lesson, a friend posted on social media that God had, at last, blessed her with a Social Security pension. One of her friends commented “God did not do that. You did that yourself. God does not get into finances.” How is this statement similar to the presumption at the bottom of the mountain?
16. Are there New Testament passages that specifically prohibit graven images (not just idolatry)? If so, list them. Would the making of images for the purpose of worship be prohibited in broader New Testament prohibitions? Think about this and list three New Testament passages that prohibit image worship?

The first commandment, which articulates an eternal principle (command) necessitating total commitment to Jehovah by His people, has already prohibited for us what the second command articulated. The first command is the superintending command that, having done its “work” on the heart, insures the obedience of all other injunctions given for any people of any era by Jehovah.

17. One last thing: There was one other person in Israel, besides Moses, who was not guilty of idolatry in Exodus 32. Who was that? What can we learn from this about physically separating ourselves from the temptations of the world around us that would pull us from the divine allegiances that we must maintain?

Practical Application:

Look at this list of idols that are *not* graven. Beside each one, place a modern day example of how we may give allegiance to the god listed. Take one day for each of the listed idols and spend time in prayer that day. Ask God to help you avoid any nod to that particular popular idol. Pray that you may have strength to avoid giving devotion (what belongs to God) to that idol in today’s world. Some may be more powerful temptations than others, but pray about them all.

- Worldly fame or entertainment
- Self
- Feelings
- Political parties
- Happiness

- Wealth or material goods
- Sexual desires
- Substances
- Fashion
- Career
- False religion
- Any person or persons— (In this prayer, include the names of those who may be the temptation of supreme allegiance for you.)

Resources:

Catholic Answers; <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/did-the-catholic-church-change-the-ten-commandments>

Catholic Answers; <https://www.catholic.com/tract/do-catholics-worship-statues>
Strong's Hebrew Lexicon; Olive Tree Online version.

Chapter 3: Don't Defame the Name

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God in vain.

The name.

It is I am. It is Yahweh, Jehovah. It is El-Shaddai, It is Elohim. It is Adonai. It is Abba. It is Jesus. It is Christ. It is Messiah. It is the Lord. It is Immanuel. It is Spirit.

When I was a child, this verse was perhaps the most often-quoted verse in our house. I grew up in the sixties and seventies, the era that gave birth to “outside” voices and pictures coming into private homes in the form of entertainment via television. The determination of my parents that we would not hear profanity in our home is forever etched into my memory. “Although we might have to hear profanity and the Lord’s name used flippantly outside this house at times, we do not have to hear it inside at home.” I’m thankful for this and I remember well that, when the Lord’s name was vainly used or some profane word was spoken on TV, someone had to get up off the couch (We did not have a remote.) and walk over and turn a clicking knob to switch the channel. I remember the fuzzy screens and the white noise that we all heard as the clicker went from channel six to channel thirteen. We had those two channels, PBS (we thought that was mostly boring) and then one channel that we called the UHF channel. That was channel 42. That was all. I remember that we often turned off the television because my mother would say, “That’s all. There’s nothing fit to watch.” We knew what taking the Lord’s name in vain was. It was using God, Lord, Jesus or Christ when you really weren’t talking about spiritual things or sincerely praying. It was also a banned list of euphemisms for those names including *Gosh*, *Gee*, *Jeez*, *Lordy*, *Gah* (the most popular euphemism at school) and *Golly*, and its other pronunciation *Golleeee*. It was also calling anything “holy” that was not holy or in conversation that was flippant. We did not say “Holy Cow” or “Holy Moley” or “Holy Guacamole”. I cannot even imagine what kind of creatively obtuse punishment would have been inflicted on me if my mom had heard me say some of the words that were being repeated in my hearing scores of times each day at school. (One time, when I was not being polite to a sibling, she made me memorize the first half of 1 Peter 3 because “be full of pity, be courteous” was in there. She had not heard that psychobabble about how the Word should never be involved in punishment!)

I’m really glad that my mother and dad had those rules in place at our house. It did a lot for my sin-sensitivity training. Of *course*, it is wrong to use those words. Every single one of the euphemisms is a flippant, unthinking reference to God; a trivialization, and in origin, a “funny” nickname for the One who is Reverend. I still believe that the banning of, and the punishment for such language by Christian parents, as they quote the third commandment, is the best early way to put in the hearts of children a reverence for the name of God (Psalm 111:9). But that foundational teaching has led me to want to respect His name in many other ways. Let’s explore what it means, in our world, to take his name in vain.

1. *Take* (as in taking His name) in the passage means *to bear, to carry, or to raise up or lift*. Write out the definition for the Hebrew word for *name* in Exodus 20:

2. Now look up the definition of the Hebrew word for *vain*.

3. According to the above, then, we are not to carry, or lift His name or His reputation, report or authority in a way that would defame, ruin, or make others count His name as worthless. Just as a precursor to this study, list five ways here that people can hurt His name in the way they might wear it.

4. When we balk at the commandments and thus the authority of the Bible, are we profaning the name of God? Explain your answer.

5. Again, let's notice the simple wording in the brief but profound command, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The largest word in the simple command has five letters. Our preschoolers can repeat the command. Interestingly, which of the other commands did God see fit to accompany with a warning of judgment as He did this brief statement?

6. Read the following Psalms and highlight every mention of the name of God. Make a list of descriptions of His name and responses to His name (what we do to, for, or when we hear—His name). Think about His name in our society today. Is it honored or blasphemed most often? Write any comments at the bottom of your list.
 - Psalms 5-9
 - Psalms 20-22
 - Psalms 29-34
 - Psalms 44, 45
 - Psalms 52-54
 - Psalms 61-69
 - Psalms 72-75

Two Columns: "Descriptions" & "Responses"

7. Interestingly, God emphasized in Scripture that He placed His name on the Jerusalem temple built by Solomon. All of the following chapters refer to His name on the house in Jerusalem. Peruse them and cite which verses mention the name of the Lord in or on the temple. When the temple was defamed, left to ruin, etc...did that occurrence profane the Lord's name? Which passage below says that the Lord finally rejected that temple due to sin? Had the temple, by that time, been profaned?

2 Samuel 7
 1 Kings 3, 5, 8, 9,
 2 Kings 21, 23
 1 Chronicles 22, 28, 29
 2 Chronicles 2, 6
 Jeremiah 7

8. Read the book of James. Let's camp out here for a few additional ways that we can make others view the name of Jesus or God as trivial or worthless, or alternately, lift His name with honor.

a. The first mishandling of the name of God is in 1:13-16. It's when we use the name of God in excusing our own sin. We are, in that process, defiling His name. Where did this "passing the blame to God" first begin? Read Romans 5 and write down every description for the gift of salvation given by God. Then make a list of phrases that are popular in our world today, that indict God in situations ultimately caused by sin (either personal sin or someone else's). This is misusing His name or carrying it in a way that defames. I'll start you off...

"God just needed her in heaven."

"God has a reason for this."

"Why did God let me fall in love with him before I knew this?"

"Why me, God?"

b. The second misuse of His name is when we claim Him (call ourselves religious) and do not bridle our tongues (1:26) This passage says our religion (the wearing of His name) is worthless and we are deceiving ourselves. Make a list from chapter three of things to which the tongue is compared. Then copy verses nine and ten of this chapter. If the name of God comes out of the same mouth as cursing, we are defaming or maligning His name.

c. The third way we take the name of God in vain from James is in chapter two, verses 1-9. Key in on verse 7 for relevance to the holy name of God. This passage tells us that there are many rich people in every society who are blasphemous. It also tells us that if we are, especially in our assemblies, catering to the people with money and ignoring the people who are poor, that we are promoters of this blasphemy. We are linking the name of God with the sin of respect of persons. Who did God honor in verse five with the gospel? How do we dishonor God in verse 6?

d. The next way that we defame the name of Jesus is found in chapter 4:1-3. It's when we pray without seeking His will in our lives. I often hear someone laugh with relief and say "Thank-you Jesus," when it is quite obvious that the exclamation is not connected to real thanksgiving. Perhaps it is when she has rubbed off a winning lottery ticket or when he makes it safely off of a thrilling roller coaster ride. This is vain prayer. It is invoking God's name flippantly. Sometimes I hear someone say, "Oh my Lord, help me," when observing a wild toddler do something very funny. This is a flippant and vain use of the Lord's name. Christians know that his name is to be revered and spoken only when we are seriously engaged in prayer or evangelism or praise or sober conversation. His name should not be mixed with the irreverent. Listen for an example of this irreverence during this month's study. You will hear it if you listen. Write it here:

- e. Another vain use of His name is when we call out to Him for things that fulfill our own lusts (4:3-8). This is when we try to use God like some kind of magic genie to fulfill our lusts for material things or fleshly desires. Read 1 John 3 and find the name by which we are called. List the actions that John chronicles, in this chapter, as being appropriate for those who are called by this name. What does this passage (James 4) say is the situation in which we do receive what we ask in His name?
- f. Now look at James 5:9-11. Verse 10 assures us that there are those who have spoken in the name of the Lord, while enduring trials with patience. This *carrying* of the name of God is the positive example of lifting his name. The first prophet we are to emulate is Job. Read Job 1 and note what he said about the name of the Lord.
- g. James 5:12 deals with oaths. “I swear to God” is a phrase often used by those in the world around us. Is this taking the name of the Lord in vain? Why or why not?
- h. 5:13 is about singing praise. Look back at your Psalms list and notice how many times the response to His name is praising that name or praising Him. Make a list of 10 songs we sing in worship that specifically extol the name of the Lord. This is the opposite of taking His name in vain.
- i. Then in verses 14-18 of chapter five, we are given the right way to invoke His name in prayer (as opposed to *d* above). (We’re going to save the anointing for another day; just noting, for now, that whatever it was—miraculous or medicinal—it was to be done in His holy name. That would have been an appropriate lifting of his name.) What are some characteristics from chapter five of invoking the name of God in a prayer that is effective (not in vain)? (6 lines Here) Now turn to read this account of Elijah’s prayers in I Kings 17 and 18. Count the number of times he used the Lord’s name in prayer and to others in these chapters. What things occurred as a result—things that brought glory rather than defamation to the holy name?
9. We can profane His name in our teaching and worship when we attempt to minimize His glory. I see this all around us today in statements like “We have to make God more casual...more relevant.” ... “We have to stop talking about His authority and focus on His compassion.” ... “God is your inner self.”... “God is that still small voice that leads you.” ... “Let’s not talk about sin and hell.” This glory-robbery is all over the entertainment-based worship services that are immediately popular and eternally damnable.

Sisters, we serve the almighty God! He is infinite in all His attributes. He is unlimited in power. He can be in all places at all times. He knows what hasn’t yet occurred and no one, much less a mere created-from-dust-human-being has the right to redefine God for relevance! The gospel changes sinners; not the other way around. It is not the responsibility (or right) of the church to make the Word palatable or to make worship fun. Read Numbers 22-23 and notice the account of a man who really wanted to soften God’s message; to make it more palatable to the Moabites. The key to the reason Balaam could not compromise and profane the message of God was in verse 19 of chapter 23. Write that verse here:

Then read Isaiah 30 and list the things that the *name* of the Lord (beginning in verse 27) would do to the wicked nation of Assyria. This name was not very palatable, at this time. We cannot soften God's message and simultaneously lift up His name.

10. There will come a day when all will confess, in full reverence, the name of the Lord. Read Philippians 2 and copy the passage where that promise is made.
11. John Calvin was certainly responsible for leading the religious world to a sad package of error. But this quote, concerning the third commandment, rings true:

The purpose of this commandment is—God wills that we hallow the majesty of His name. Therefore, it means, in brief, that we are not to profane His namely treating it contemptuously and irreverently. To this prohibition duly corresponds the commandment that we should be zealous and careful to honor His name with godly reverence. Therefore, we ought to be so disposed in mind and speech that we neither think nor say anything concerning God and His mysteries without reverence and much soberness that in estimating His works we conceive nothing but what is honorable in Him.

12. When we balk at the commandments, thus resisting the authority of the Bible, are we profaning the name of God? Explain your answer.
13. **There are many methods of taking His name in vain. Is each one that we've introduced here also a placement of another god before Him? Think about this and discuss.**

Practically Speaking:

Here's just one of a seemingly infinite array of observations one finds when reading about portrayals of religious events by Hollywood:

"...Changes in the way America worships have also influenced the way in which movies portray God. One of the things we're seeing since World War II is a greater emphasis on an 'embodied experience,' as is found in Pentecostalism and revivalism. People relate more to God in human form than if it's a voice coming out of a bush." (Mazur)

This quote is, of course, one example of taking the name of the Lord in vain. The problems with this statement are several and serious. Changes in the way we worship are ways we profane the name. "Making" God human is also taking His name in vain. Relating to God, in the sense meant here, is impossible and any attempt to do so is demeaning to the name of God. Speaking disparagingly of the glorious voice from the bush is irreverent.

Look for quotes that are spoken in your hearing or written in your reading this month that take the name of the Lord in vain, in one or more ways. Jot down any that you find here. This is good sensitivity training. Our ears should still be shocked, our hearts offended, when the name of our

God is deemed worthless. Pray that you will honor His Will and name before others in all of your associations. (How many ever lines you have! =)

Works Referenced

Calvin, John; from <https://www.biblestudytools.com/history/calvin-institutes-christianity/book2/chapter-8/third-commandment.html>

Mazur, Eric Michael; "Encyclopedia of Religion and Film, ABC CLIO, Santa Barbara, CA, 2011.

Resources

Strong's Hebrew Concordance; Olive Tree Online Version

Chapter 4: The Controversial Command

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Last May, as our Digging Deep group traveled in the country of Israel, our weekend travels took us to a Jewish hotel. On Saturday, we were warned that the buffet that night would consist of leftovers from the evening prior (actually having been cooked before sundown on Friday) and that they would be served at room temperature because of the Jewish prohibitions of work and using electricity on the Sabbath. The most interesting thing about the Sabbath in Israel, to me (although there were many), was the Jewish elevator in the public buildings. We were duly warned that, were we to board the Shabbat elevator, the ride would take a long time. The elevator opens on every single floor, so that Jews who are observing Shabbat (or Sabbath) do not have to push any buttons to enter the elevator or to choose a floor number on which to exit. The elevator operates in fully automatic mode; stopping, opening and closing on each floor. The Jewish tradition has equated the use of electronics with sparking a fire, which is banned each week from sundown on Friday night till sundown on Saturday night. I understand that, if the public building is void of an automated Jewish elevator, a non-Jewish person is hired to operate the elevator.

This scenario is but one depiction of the highly regulated modern weekly observance for today's Orthodox Jew that has developed from what formally began in Exodus 20:8-10 with these words from Jehovah:

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep 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, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

1. There are some who believe that, since the Sabbath is tied to creation in this passage, Adam was the first Sabbath-keeper; thus, the ritual has existed since the beginning of time. Read Nehemiah 9 and look for confirmation that Sabbath-keeping began with the decree at Sinai in Exodus 20. This makes it unlike all of the other commands, with the possible exception of the second one. All of the others are common-sense requirements of a just and holy God and need little, if any, stated reason. All of the others (also with the possible exception of parts of the second commandment) were in force, as moral laws, from the beginning of time. They were right because they were morally and inherently right. The law of the Sabbath became right when God decreed it. Write the Nehemiah 9 citation here:
2. Review Exodus 16. Notice verses 4-6. God said he was testing the people to see if they would walk in His law. Do you think he was referring to the upcoming decree about the Sabbath? Was He testing them to see if they would keep the Sabbath? Discuss.
3. Read Psalm 105 and 106. These Psalms are historical accounts of the progression of the growing Israelite nation. Between which verses would the Exodus 20 giving of the law, which was omitted from each chapter, have landed, had it been included by the Holy Spirit?

The sins of the growing nation which provoked the Lord to anger are briefly chronicled in the 106th Psalm. Do you believe that their faithful keeping of the Sabbath would have prolonged their covenant-keeping with Jehovah and delayed their captivity? Why or why not?

4. We have not had to examine Scripture diligently to see the “why” of the previous commandments. This one’s different. Do we have to speculate about the Sabbath and why Israel was commanded to observe it? Let’s look at three passages. First re-read Exodus 20:11. The first, but maybe not most important reason, was for physical rest. It’s difficult for us to comprehend the need to be commanded to rest in our American count-down-to-weekend world, but as a people exiting a slave culture, the Israelites needed a Father to regulate a healthy work/rest system for them.

Next, re-read Deuteronomy 5. In the paragraph about the Sabbath, note what they were to remember. Write what is written before the “therefore” of the passage.

The reason given here for Sabbath-keeping is so that they could remember their powerful deliverance. I’m confident that this remembrance was accompanied by relief and thanksgiving, especially in this first generation of free people.

Thirdly, read Ezekiel 20. In the Sabbath paragraph of this chapter what reason for giving the Sabbath was stated? How many times does this chapter state that the nation polluted the Sabbaths of the Lord? When they polluted the Sabbaths, what other sin accompanied the pollution? Does this dual sin have a bearing on the answer to number three above—the length of their years of covenant-keeping and blessings from Jehovah? How important was the Sabbath in keeping the people sanctified?

5. If we were assigning names to these reasons for God giving the Sabbath, we might say, from Exodus 20, the reason was “rest.” Their Father/Deliverer was giving them a day of rest, even promising them that their rest would not impede their abilities to meet the physical needs of their families. (The observance—the rest— set them apart, from other nations, as uniquely Jehovah’s people). The reason from Deuteronomy five could be labeled “deliverance”. Every Saturday they were reminded of the great deliverance from bondage. They had never had the freedom to choose a day of rest while in bondage. The reason from Ezekiel could be called “covenant” (vs. 12). It was a sign between them and God and it set them apart from other nations. It’s the one command that showed others, in a tangible way, that they were a sanctified people.
6. As we think about these three reasons for the giving of the Sabbath, read Hebrews 1-9. Find our rest, our deliverance and our covenant in these chapters. Cite those passages here:

rest:

deliverance:

covenant:

7. When we consider the *rest* aspect of the Sabbath, we come to understand why Jesus said, in Mark 2:27 that man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man. I believe that the Sabbath of Exodus 20, in one sense, was a gift for the people of Israel. Imagine how, after years of crying out to the Lord for relief from extremely difficult (and unrewarding) work, the Israelites would have welcomed a day of calm family time and rest. (Some scholars believe Exodus 5:5 indicates that the Israelites were observing the Sabbath even in Egypt. I do not believe this to be the case, for multiple reasons.) Are there commands today that are also apparent gifts? List any that come to mind and discuss:

8. Read this well-written article from *Christian Courier* about exactly when the observation of the sabbath began: <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1071-was-the-sabbath-a-divine-requirement-from-the-time-of-creation>. The article is entitled *Was the Sabbath a Divine Requirement from the Time of Creation?* Make notes here:

9. As we studied last month there were lots of ways to profane or pollute His name or to take the name of God in vain. Was God working, according to Ezekiel 20, for his name or His reputation by establishing these sanctification rules for Israel, including the Sabbath regulations? Note the verse.

10. Read the following scriptures and, with each new reading, add any new prohibitions or regulations about the Sabbath that you find.

Genesis 2: 2, 3	Numbers 15:32-36	Lamentations 2:6 (<i>This was what God thought of the Sabbath when His people had rebelled.</i>)
Exodus 23:12	Numbers 28:9,10	Ezekiel 22:8
Exodus 31:13-17	Nehemiah 9:13	Ezekiel 23:38
Exodus 34:21	Nehemiah 10:31	Ezekiel 44:24
Exodus 35:2	Nehemiah 13	Ezekiel 46:1
Leviticus 23	Isaiah 56:2-7	
Leviticus 24:8	Isaiah 58:13	
Leviticus 25	Jeremiah 17:21-27	
Leviticus 26		

Now compare the previous list to this list of 39 Sabbath prohibitions:

The 39 Prohibited Activities

As based on the Mishnah Tractate Shabbat 7:2, the 39 activities are:

Sowing	Beating wool	Flaying
Plowing	Dyeing wool	Tanning
Reaping	Spinning	Scraping hide
Binding sheaves	Weaving	Marking hides
Threshing	Making two loops	Cutting hide to shape
Winnowing	Weaving two threads	Writing two or more letters

Selecting Grinding Sifting Kneading Baking Shearing wool Washing wool	Separating two threads Tying Untying Sewing stitches Tearing Trapping Slaughtering	Erasing two or more letters Building Demolishing Extinguishing a fire Kindling a fire Putting the finishing touch on an object Transporting an object between a private domain and the public domain, or for a distance of 4 cubits within the public domain.
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from (*The Nazarene Way*)

Here's another comprehensive list of prohibited Shabbat activities under modern Jewish law. This one has more detailed explanations:

https://www.ou.org/holidays/shabbat/the_thirty_nine_categories_of_sabbath_work_prohibited_by_law/

Write any comparison notes here:

11. Now read Matthew 12, Luke 13, Luke 14, and John 5. Make notes about what Jesus said about the Sabbath. Who was Lord of the Sabbath? Who fulfilled the Sabbath?
12. Did Jesus break the fourth command? Read the article entitled *Did Jesus Break the Sabbath?* by Dr. Dave Miller, on the Apologetics Press website. The link is <http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1189&article=2507>. Make notes here. (This article gives great clarity about the distinction between the actual Sabbath law, which the Lord kept, and the additional prohibitions of the current Jewish rulers, which were not binding in heaven as part of the old law.)
13. Read Matthew 5. **In the context of Matthew 5:17, Jesus began His “It has been said—But I say unto you” lesson. Jesus made a repeated point about how commandment-keeping was always the natural consequence of a heart that was tied to the heart of Jehovah. (In fact, he posited in Matthew 5 that keeping the basic commandment was the minimum outgrowth of a will that was given over to God.) How does this discourse dovetail with our continuing emphasis that obedience to the first commandment was the premise and the other nine were the details of the law?...that if Israel had obeyed the number one commandment, then any violations of all the other commandments would have been rare and would have been followed by swift repentance?** Does this heart (of being given over to the first commandment) perhaps make the difference between a presumptuous sin and a sin of ignorance? Good discussion.
14. Read these passages for determining the day Christians observed in New Testament times by coming together to “break bread”.

John 20:19

Acts 20:7

I Corinthians 16:2
Revelation 1:10

What is the literal meaning of *the first day of the week* in I Corinthians 16:2?

15. It is significant to examine that the Sabbath involved more than one day per week per calendar year. Read Leviticus 23 and highlight each different use of *Sabbath*. Sabbath originally meant seventh (as in seventh day), but later came to mean also cessation or time of rest. Not every Sabbath noted in Scripture was the regular weekly Saturday observance.

James Burton Coffman offers this chart in his book “The Ten Commandments Yesterday and Today” illustrating how many Sabbaths would have occurred in a fifty year period.

Saturday	2600 days
Passover	100 days
Day of First fruits	50 days
Feast of trumpets	50 days
Feast of Tabernacles	50 days
Sabbaths of Years	2520 days
Year of Jubilee	365 days
Days of Atonement	50 days

This chart indicates that a full 16 years of every 50 years was some type of Sabbath. We need to reiterate, in view of this, that every type of Sabbath was not equally regulated. It is obvious, for instance, that Jubilee was a year of rest for the land and a year of return of leased land to its original owner as well as a release of servants, rather than a year-long cessation of work. Read Leviticus 25 and make notes of the regulations for the year of Jubilee.

16. Some advocate that the sabbath, since it was originally consecrated for later observance at the time of creation (Gen.2:2,3), continues to be the proper day for religious observation throughout the Christian era. Take the time to read and make notes from this scholarly article by Dr. Dave Miller about the Sunday observance of worship.

<https://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=11&article=1254>. The article is entitled *Sunday and the Lord's Supper*.

17. Finally, while this month's study is not intended, primarily, to convict about the proper day of the week for Christian worship, it lends itself to a valuable study from Romans 7. You might need this someday if you are in a study with someone who advocates keeping the Sabbath or Saturday worship today. If there are those who are studying along who are Sabbath-keepers as a matter of law, I'd invite you to contact me with any discussion or questions at byhcontest@gmail.com.

- a. Often those who advocate Saturday worship today (in place of Sunday worship) will note that the Sabbath is part of the ten commandments and that those commandments, along with the two greatest commands, constitute the *royal law*. They argue that, while

the Mosaic law was fulfilled and is no longer in effect (thus their reasoning for not burning incense, not offering animal sacrifices, etc...), the ten commandments are different. They are the royal law which continues to be in effect. Seventh day worship proponents draw a bold line between what they call the ceremonial law (washings, sacrifices, food laws, etc...) and the royal law (the ten commandments.) Note the use of the term *royal law* in James 2. Make any notes here:

- b. Here is one example, from a quick google search, of the teaching that equates the royal law of James 2 with the ten commandments:

Now we must add James 2:8 to our thinking. The fourth commandment is just as much a part of the royal law, the Ten Commandments. If not one jot or tittle, not even the least commandment, is done away until everything is fulfilled, the conclusion has to be that the Sabbath is still in effect—regardless of what men say—and to break it is immoral. It is just as immoral as adultery or fornication, lust, or lying. (John Ritenbaugh)

- c. Is there indeed a difference between the rest of the law of Moses and the ten commandments relative to the duration of effect? Read Romans 7 and key in on verse 7. Which law is the law that contains the phrase “Thou shalt not covet?” Is it the law that Seventh Day Adventists would call the royal law? How do you know?
- d. What does verse 6 say about our relationship to that law? Have we been delivered from the law that contained the ten commandments?
- f. Do we keep any of the ten commandments today? Are we under any of them? Why or why not?

Practically Speaking:

Study Exodus 20 and see if you can find a passage there that proves that the days of Genesis one were twenty-four hour periods. Share this finding with a group of children in your Bible school or your home.

OR

Write a card to someone you know who has become negligent in faithful Sunday worship. Encourage this person to return to this commanded assembly time for the saints. Include an encouraging passage of scripture.

OR

Ask your elders how you can encourage faithful worship in your congregation. Tell them you would love to help them if they see needs you can fill to promote faithfulness.

Resources

Ritenbaugh, John; Bible Tools; <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/CGG/ID/4297/Royal-Law.htm>

The Nazarene Way; http://thenazareneway.com/sabbath/39_prohib_sabbath.htm.

Chapter 5: The Foundational Family Command

Honor thy Father and Mother

Nestled right in between the commands that are about the relationship between man and God and those that are about our relationships with our neighbors, is this one important command about our relationships with our parents. Of course, it's also indirectly about our relationships with our children, too. Maybe your mom and dad told you it's the one command for children and it just means to obey. Well, it's not really just for kids and it's about a lot more than minding your mom. Let's look at this commandment and its relevance for all generations.

Authority is the catalyst for order. If there is no authority or standard to which all principles in any cooperative society must adhere, that society ceases to be cooperative. If there is no music, the orchestra produces dissonance. If there is no law, communities implode. If there are no assembly instructions, your complicated Lego structure will not resemble the real thing. If there's no GPS (or at least a roadmap or a husband/authority on the phone) I'm not at the destination.

The family is the school that places respect for authority in the souls of children. It is the divine pattern for both our relationship as children with the Father and our relationship as the bride to Christ. The fifth commandment is clearly foundational to covenant living in Christ.

1. Let's look at the covenant aspect of commandment number five. Is it an if/then conditional statement? How so? To what does the word "land" refer?
2. Look at the Hebrew word for *honor* in the fifth commandment. How do we know this responsibility to honor is a serious responsibility? This will be especially meaningful if you were along for last year's dig.
3. Read Mark 7. What do we see in this passage that lends credence to our knowledge that the Jews (and Jesus) understood the fifth commandment to be for adults?
4. Let's notice next that God intends for our homes to be the basic models for the people of God. Read 2 Samuel 7 and highlight the places where God likens Israel to a family. Find another Old Testament passage in which Israel is compared to children of the father.
5. List five ways in which our society has become a culture that largely dishonors parents, both in general and paying special attention to the dishonoring of parents who adhere to God's system of morality.
6. Some readers may remember a heat wave of epic proportions passed through Europe in 2003. In the country of France alone that summer, there were over 14,000 deaths, most of which were among the elderly. One of the largest contributing factors was that the younger generations, who were still capable of travel, were away on holiday, escaping the heat. Many bodies were not claimed for weeks because family members were away. Undertakers used a warehouse outside of Paris for the numerous bodies because they did not have sufficient

space in morgues. On September 3rd of that year, 57 unclaimed bodies were buried. All experts agreed that one of the reasons for the deaths and unclaimed bodies was a system in which respect for the elderly had drastically declined in recent decades. New laws were passed to insure that adult children are legally responsible for aged parents. (There are many web sources with commentary about this event in 2003. A google search will give more details.)

Is this occurring in the home countries of women who are involved in our study? Research to see if you can find trends in your country or state that have to do with elderly care. How does this commandment impact our decisions about the placement of our elderly in care facilities? What responsibilities do adult Christians have to aged parents? This is good and relevant group discussion, particularly as people are living longer.

7. Read Ephesians 6:1-5 and copy here the repeated command that was originally given in Exodus 20. According to Deuteronomy 6, parents have the responsibility to teach their children these very statutes from Exodus 20. Give practical ideas (suggestions and resources) that parents can use to put this honor in the hearts of their children. This is also pertinent group discussion.
8. There are three basic roles that parents must play to establish order and respect for authority in the home. I believe parents must feel a deep responsibility to be nurturers, educators and disciplinarians. See if you can find passages for Israel and for us today that would validate the necessity of all three of these roles. You might use a concordance and the words *teach, love, nurture, chasten, child* and *rod*, for starters. Let's make a list of great mom verses here!
9. Read Luke 15. Pay special attention to the account of the Prodigal Son. What attributes of *the* Father (God) are displayed in the father in this account? By what actions did the adult son dishonor the father? Make a list.
10. How do we know, Biblically, that the primary responsibility of putting respect in children belongs to parents? Does this ever present a problem in some of our church youth ministries? Why is it very important for parents to view the youth program as an adjunct tool for parental use and not a surrogate or proxy?
11. Some child therapists today tell us that parents should not try to force good behavior (i.e. administer corporal or "force" punishment), but instead should try to work on the heart so that the behavior will follow. Is this Biblical? Is it fallacious? Explain and discuss.
12. In His book, "Words from the Fire," R. Albert Mohler said this: *As a Biblical principle, the physical pain of justice meted out by the parental magistrate standing in the place of God is a teacher that reaches the soul.* Discuss the truth and relevance of this statement. Does corporal punishment introduce children to the concepts of judgment and justice?
13. Read Hebrews 12 and copy the portion that shows us our God as a disciplining Father. Where do children best learn this principle? It's interesting to research statistics on the benefits and "dangers" of spanking. It's a mixed bag, but the majority of media information,

particularly outside the religious sector, is very critical of spanking as a form of discipline. Is this one area of parenting today in which Christians just have to trust the Word rather than the culture? Explain. You may want to do your own research and present findings to a discussion group.

14. In our study in Month 3, we learned that the name of a Father is very important. How do adult children today honor their fathers' (dads') names in God's system of patrimony? List five Old Testament children who brought honor to their father's names. Then list five children who brought dishonor to the family name or to the father. Try to find at least one instance in which this is specifically stated.
15. What is God's household or family today? Find Scripture for your answer.
16. As I was writing this lesson my husband preached a lesson from John 8— about a debate between Christ and the Pharisees. Read this chapter and find evidence that true fatherhood is not just about biology, but also involves character.
17. Read Titus 2 and I Peter 3. From those two texts, list five ways mothers can encourage their children to show honor to the household patriarch.
18. Who is the parent in I Samuel who failed to discipline His sons? List the consequences of that failure.

Practically Speaking

Read the book *Your Mama Don't Dance* By Glenn and Cindy Colley
(<https://thecolleyhouse.org/store#!/Your-Mama-Dont-Dance/p/14051577/category=3290199>)

OR

Listen to the audio: *Building Great Kids* (<https://thecolleyhouse.org/store#!/Building-Great-Kids-DVD-with-Glenn-Colley/p/30841379/category=6620082>)

OR

Read Leviticus 20 and Deuteronomy 28 and find the passage that enjoins a punishment for one who curses a parent. Then list the punishments God promised to those who failed to keep the law with which we concern ourselves in this year's study. Then read 3 John and highlight the verse that speaks of children who walk in truth. Cross-stitch, write in calligraphy or copy this verse on a card for a parent whose teen or adult children are walking in truth. Give this card or gift for an encouragement to that parent. (You may alternately choose to purchase this verse on some card or gift, rather than making it.)

Resources:

2003 European Heat Wave: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2003_European_heat_wave
Mohler, R. Albert; Words from the Fire; Moody Publishers; Chicago, IL 2009; p. 104.

Chapter 6: We Think We're Good on This One

Thou shalt not kill.

Most of us think we've got this one down. We understand it. We are never going to violate it. We abhor the commission of this unthinkable transgression of law. We're broken-hearted because we see it each day when we watch the news. This may be the most quoted command in our hearing.

For our purposes, I believe we can use this working definition for the verb *kill*. It's *the deliberate taking of innocent human life*. Having said that, it's important to remember that the word deliberate may be a word of varying degrees. Is it murder if I really didn't mean to take innocent human life, but I didn't really think it through beforehand? What if I took actions or failed to take actions that I knew might possibly result in the death of a fellow human being? What if I'm the drunk driver or the drugged mother or the absentee father who knows about the danger, but simply is not stepping to the plate? What if I am an officer standing by while an innocent man is killed by a fellow officer? What if I am the protester watching while another protester takes things too far and an innocent officer is killed? Am I complicit if I know it's happening and I am not speaking up? Let's take a sober look at the commandment most of us believe is pretty far removed from our personal space of offense.

1. What did Jesus say about murder in the Sermon on the Mount? Read Matthew 5:1-22 and write His words about murder below. How does this statement of Christ confirm that the first command (the one about our heart's priority) instructs all the others?
2. It's rare, in our study, that our research is not all exactly the same for the entire group. This time, though, I'd like you to go the website www.apologeticspress.org. In the search bar, type "God's destruction". Choose any one (as a minimum) of the first six articles that pop up there. Read carefully and make notes. Then imagine you are in a debate with an atheist who cannot reconcile the fact that God can be both righteous and demand execution of thousands. Make your list of arguments to present below. I'd love to hear some of this debate from our Digging Deep groups. Perhaps there is a digger in your group who might even volunteer to be the skeptic in your debate. Let's be resolved to be able to give an answer to those who ask a reason for our hope (1 Peter 3:15). Every digger is not required to participate in a debate in order to be a study finisher. But the study from the website and notes with argumentation is a study requirement.
3. Next, let's read 2 Samuel 1-13 and make notes about each death in these chapters. Determine if the death fits our definition of killing. Notice that, sometimes, the fact that a death is not a homicide does not mean that everyone involved in the scenario is blameless in the death. Then let's specifically look at chapter 11.
4. As chapter 11 begins, I believe David would have thought that the idea that he could intentionally murder Uriah, his trusted military leader, was incredulous. Most of us will never be tempted to intentionally take a life. But we know someone who's been tempted; maybe a mother who's bearing someone's child out of wedlock or perhaps a depressed co-worker,

who is capable of making rational choices, has made some serious financial mistakes, and is seriously considering snuffing out her own life. Some of us even know someone who has planned and executed the killing of a family member or friend. If we were able to know the facts, in how many of these situations, would the murderer or the one who is considering taking a life have just awakened one day and decided to try and take an innocent life? The thought, if the subject were not so serious, is laughable. Few people just innately have a desire to murder. There are usually other sins—motives—that move one slowly to the situation in which murder can even come to mind as a possible “solution”. List the sins in 2 Samuel 11 that occurred between righteousness and murder. How many of these sins are prohibited in the 10 commandments? **Is the first commandment always violated in the case of murder?** Explain.

5. We hear a lot today about the “sanctity of life”. What is the dictionary’s definition of sanctity. See if you can find passages in Scripture that underscore the sanctity of all human life. The sixth commandment tops this list.
6. Read Romans 13 and write a paragraph about capital punishment. Is capital punishment killing? Why or why not? Study this article (<https://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=12&article=1630>) entitled Capital Punishment and the Bible as you formulate your thoughts about this. (Note: Moms, if you are studying along with teens, you may want to give them a different article to read on this topic. This one does describe a documented and graphic case of rape, by way of illustration.)
7. Read these chapters and cite the seven suicides of the Bible. Is suicide killing (assuming the one who takes life is not insane)? Is suicide a violation of the sixth commandment? Does it fit the definition of murder?

Judges 9
Judges 16
I Samuel 31
2 Samuel 17
I Kings 16
Matthew 27

8. What about physician-assisted suicide?...or personal euthanasia? Do these infringe on the sanctity of life? Do these practices promote a culture of death? Read the following, written by Mary Wurster and published by *The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission*. Write comments below:

What does the Bible teach about euthanasia and physician assisted suicide?

July 27, 2018 by [Mary Wurster](#)

For centuries, physicians have adhered to the sentiment described by the Hippocratic Oath. One of the clauses included in the historic commitment is this: “I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect.”

Those who subscribe to the oath promise to refrain from participating in two actions now known as euthanasia and physician assisted suicide.

Euthanasia is the intentional act of taking a human life for the purpose of relieving pain and suffering. This can occur actively or passively. Active euthanasia involves an intentional act on the part of the physician toward a patient that causes death. Passive euthanasia involves withholding treatment with the intent to cause death. Physician assisted suicide, "PAS", is a type of voluntary euthanasia in which a doctor either intentionally provides information to a patient about how to commit suicide, or prescribes the means that allow the patient to commit suicide.

There are three primary arguments in favor of euthanasia and PAS: autonomy, minimizing pain and suffering, and the idea that there is no morally relevant difference between taking steps to hasten death and allowing the dying process to occur. Even though a physician intentionally ending the life of a patient was considered unthinkable for centuries, western sentiment seems to be changing. In fact, both euthanasia and PAS are sometimes referred to as "death with dignity." But the Bible teaches that euthanasia and PAS are actually enemies of dignity. Let's consider what the Bible might have to say about these arguments.

Mercy killing

Those who advocate euthanasia and PAS do so for largely understandable reasons. They wish to take away the suffering of terminally ill individuals, and they may even claim that there is a moral obligation to do so. In fact, in Canada, if a physician refuses to participate in euthanasia or PAS, he is legally required to refer patients to a physician who will. But the Bible teaches that suffering is not necessarily something that should be avoided at all costs. Romans 5:3 teaches us to "rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance." Similarly, James teaches this: "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4).

For most people, including Christians, rejoicing in our sufferings is not easy. A dying person screaming in pain or weeping in loneliness in a hospital bed does not want to be told to be joyful in his suffering; and indeed, he generally shouldn't be. But Christian ethicist Gilbert Meilaender said, "We should maximize care rather than minimizing suffering, which might include eliminating the sufferer." Likewise, the authors of "Always to Care, Never to Kill" in the journal "First Things" concluded, "Although it may sometimes appear to be an act of compassion, killing is never a means of caring." Inspired by Meilaender and the authors of "Always to Care, Never to Kill", Stephen Phillips, an Indiana professor and physician once thoughtfully suggested that sometimes, true care is holding someone's hand and suffering right alongside him. It is not taking his life or suggesting that he take his own.

Freedom of choice

Others in favor of euthanasia and PAS cite personal autonomy and freedom of choice. Everyone, they argue, has a right to die when and how they choose, and in fact, human dignity includes this. But consider the words of Job: “A person’s days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed” (Job 14:5). Euthanasia and PAS “assert a desire to be infinite” and reject a dependence on God, the author of life and controller of death.

Withholding treatment: A morally relevant distinction

Advocates would insist that there is no relevant difference between euthanasia or PAS and withholding life-saving treatment from a dying individual. They claim that since withholding medical treatment can be permissible, euthanasia or PAS must also be permissible, because the end result, the death of a person, is the same in either situation. Therefore, there must be no difference between any of these actions. This, however, is simply not the case.

Allowing to die involves withholding treatment without an intent to cause death. This is a form of beneficence, or preventing harm to a person. Examples might include removing a ventilator from a grandmother with no hope of recovery, or choosing to refrain from potentially fruitless chemotherapy. The authors of “Always to Care, Never to Kill” explain it like this: “It is permitted to refuse or withhold medical treatment in accepting death while we continue to care for the dying. It is never permitted . . . to take any action that is aimed at the death of ourselves or others.”

God commands, “You must not murder” (Ex. 20:13). Jesus also commands us, “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). Allowing someone to die by withholding treatment may combine these two sentiments, because the intention is to care for a person in the best way possible, rather than to cause death. The morally relevant distinction between euthanasia or PAS and allowing someone to die involves intention and benevolent care.

Enemies of dignity

“So God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God He created them; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). Human beings are created in the Imago Dei—the Image of God. This alone gives us inherent dignity and a value to our lives. At some point, determining that our lives are not worth living fundamentally rejects this dignity.

Euthanasia has been legal in Belgium since 2002. Thousands of individuals in this country alone are euthanized each year. Countries like Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, and others are perfect examples of how opening the door to voluntary euthanasia leads directly to the practice of non-voluntary euthanasia, which is the killing of sick individuals who are incapable of consent, and even involuntary euthanasia, which is the killing of sick individuals against their will. These practices, although abhorrent, become normalized when a society deems certain lives not worth living.

Euthanasia and PAS reject the inherent dignity that God has given human beings. Participants seek to eliminate suffering, but they instead eliminate the objective value of

life. Although the Bible does not speak to either euthanasia or PAS directly, Christian thought demands a critical and biblically-based approach to the subject. The value of human life in all its forms and at all stages is the central theme of the gospel, for it is the very purpose of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection. To fail to respect human life at any point mocks the very essence of Christ's mission to humanity.

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9. Now, let's take a hard look at what is, by far and away, the most tragic death phenomenon that has occurred in our country. The abortion culture, in America, began as an ethical dilemma in 1973 and progressed to a multi-billion dollar industry that has taken the lives of upwards of 60 million babies since the US Supreme Court decision known as *Roe v. Wade*. The slaughtered number is about 1/5 the total number of US citizens today. One in four US pregnancies ends in induced abortion. Did you get that? Every fourth child is killed, with the top two reasons (accounting for almost 50 percent of abortions) being that the mother is not ready for other children at the time of pregnancy (timing is wrong) and that the mother doesn't feel financially able to have the baby. Unthinkable!

The problem is, of course, she already has the baby! The *timing*, for her was not *wrong* for a previous decision to be sexually active. Additionally, there are thousands of people anxiously waiting to adopt children in the US, for whom the timing is not wrong. The truth is, the hundreds of thousands of convenience abortions that occur each year in America occur because of selfishness. "I want what I want more than I want to preserve the life of my fully genetically engineered, designed-and-sustained-in-the-womb-by-the-Creator, possessor-of-a-beating-heart, endowed-with-an-eternal-soul—child. I simply want what I want now more than I want to preserve the life of the innocent child for whom I am responsible."

Each time Christians speak out about this mass killing, criticism comes from those around them, sometimes even those who are members of the church. It generally comes in the form of the specific criticism that those who are verbal in the fight against abortion are uncaring about those who find themselves in situations of difficult pregnancies. This criticism is unfair and generally unfounded. Most of the time, the critic does not know about the heart or activity of the pro-life activist. It is quite possible to decry the evil of murder, while helping others to resist the temptation to commit that sin and helping them to become whole and productive life-givers in Christ. I know many who do just that. Sometimes, the criticism is that those who oppose abortion are not *loud* enough about other sins.

But we cannot bend because of criticism. We cannot be silent because of the uninformed criticisms of those who find us too political or who may call us *single-issue voters*. This, dear sisters, is not about a matter of political expediency— as, say controversial climate change or

how to balance the budget. This is, quite literally, a matter of life and death for about a million children in our country each year.

There may have been a day, before ultrasound, in-utero heart monitoring technology and the survival of over one-third of all babies born at just 22 weeks, when people who did not believe the Word of God about life in the womb, could have looked the other way and, in their hearts, gotten around the truth that all induced abortion is murder. But that ship has sailed. We look into wombs. We hear the hearts beating. We hold babies who are thriving after exiting the womb at earlier and earlier gestational stages. We are scientifically sure that babies feel pain at twenty weeks and yet the majority of our legislators in Washington refused, during the year of this writing, to pass a bill to criminalize the ripping apart of those children. May God help us to ignore the voices that criticize pro-life activists for being unloving and may He help us to continue hearing the sixth commandment.

We live in dark times. Let's remind ourselves by reading from the Scriptures those passages that are so clear about life (and God's work) in the womb.

Read the following chapters and highlight the verses that speak to the current discussion: (three lines for each reading)

Psalm 139

Jeremiah 1

Job 31

Psalm 22

Luke 1 and Luke 2 (From these chapters locate the Greek word *brephos* and note in each instance to whom it referred.)

10. Now, I want to venture even a little further into culturally unpopular waters and ask the group to think for a bit about the fact that many abortions are not included in the above numbers, remaining unreported to the CDC because of the prevalent availability (often over-the-counter) of chemical “emergency contraceptives.” These can often be taken up to five days after sexual intercourse has occurred. Of course, these are actually not contraceptives, as they are, in effect, abortive and they are not always included in the abortion statistics available.

Further, because of advanced methods of infertility treatments, there are now over a million embryos (babies) being stored in freezers for an indefinite time into the future. (Did you get that?...over a million.) Parents, many of whom have completed their plans for family, are paying monthly storage fees and leaving their children in the freezer indefinitely. Lots of parents of these embryos (children) have dropped off the radars of the clinics and no one is even paying the fees. What happens to these in vitro fertilization by-products— freezer embryos? When there are parents, those parents of the embryos can choose to donate them to another infertile couple for implantation, donate them to science (where parents are assured they “will not become children”) or thaw and dispose of them.

I can hardly believe this kind of parenting decision is an every day occurrence in our country and that I know several families who are members of the body of Christ who have made this decision to conceive and leave. We need to talk about the consequences of this process. We need to inform.

This past year, I was blessed to get to be a small part of the placement of multiple frozen embryos into a godly home. However, I certainly cannot endorse the process that can leave life, Biblically formed in the image of God, in a freezer. It amounts to a conscious decision to have children, but not to raise them.

For those who are not faint of heart, I'd recommend the reading of the following. This is a piece that I've written—largely reconstructed from some real accounts that I've read or witnessed. Although the real accounts and personal stories are there for anyone to read, and I could have merely used the words of others, I do not want to cause undue pain to growing children or even family members who may be mourning. For this reason, I do not link you to any real family. I've reconstructed, from real stories. Some of the statements are chilling to me. A mom's process of deciding not to let a baby live because of her aversion to knowing that someone else would be raising that "part of her" is unbelievably difficult to contemplate. Choosing the "thaw and dispose" method of dealing with decisions that have produced a child is just more than I can think about for very long. Here it is. Based on (and very closely aligned with) real events in the lives of anonymous women. (Remember, these are not my thoughts and feelings. This is a compilation of common thoughts of mothers who've chosen to become pregnant using in vitro fertilization.)

What I had in my kitchen counter drawer were just a stack of forms, legal and medical, and a blank form for us to fill out to inform the clinic of our decision.

For three years, we'd known, my husband and I, in the back of our heads that we needed to make some sort of decision about the embryo we'd been storing at a Denver fertility clinic. But we were busy. We both had jobs and we were raising our seven-year-old daughter and her two younger twin brothers, aged 5. The cost of storing the eggs was increasing and so we thought it might be a good time to look at those forms in the drawer again. We needed to do something about the embryo that was labeled, in our lives, "suspended."

We could implant the embryo and pray for another child. But that was something we'd decided long ago that we simply could not handle. We were struggling to find the energy and resources to always be "on our game" as it was. We could let someone else use the embryo—someone else who was having trouble conceiving. Or we could donate the embryos to research. Lastly, we could just thaw and discard the embryos.

There were several times when, upon noticing the automatic debit on our bank statement, I'd ventured to the drawer to get the papers and have a conversation with Levan, my husband. But when I looked at them, I became anxious and an unsettled feeling made me want to just close the drawer and wait for another time. There was always a soccer game, a preschool festival or a doctor visit for one of the kids. There was always something to take my focus to something less stressful.

The options were clearly stated on the paperwork, but the way to go about the conversation and decision were less clear. Six years had gone by since our last visit to the clinic. I could, I found, for a time, place the decision on a back burner and enjoy my children and our lives together, but I could never forget the drawer.

We'd spent two years about a decade ago trying to have a child. We were thrilled when Eden was conceived and, finally born—elated, really. She looks just like her daddy and she was an easy sleep-all-night-at-two-months kind of baby. So when she was a year old, we wanted to try again.

But this time, the fears and frustrations were compounded over a four year period of trying everything—herbal infertility remedies, eastern meditation techniques, and western medicine's fertility drugs. Nothing worked. I had a series of tests and an exploratory surgery. We tried several artificial inseminations. As a last resort my husband and I decided to try in vitro fertilization. This is a process that's very expensive and my husband and I pulled from the last of our savings and borrowed some money from my parents to pay for it. It drained more than our finances. It drained us of stamina and it drained us emotionally. We were hopeful, though, and continued to pray.

During the first menstrual cycle, I had to give myself shots to stimulate the ovaries and then more shots to help them maintain the eggs. It was a painful process and I often felt like just giving up. But, as time went by, the clinic was able to retrieve eight healthy eggs. They fertilized five of these, four of which were alive and well after a three-day waiting period.

This is when the first two eggs were implanted. My husband went to a waiting area and I spread my legs apart on the exam table where the doctor showed me the two eggs we'd chosen before implanting them. (We chose to implant two so that our odds would be better of a successful implantation and pregnancy to follow.) I'm sure they were magnified a million times on that screen, but they were already so sweet to me. They were kind of fuzzy little blobs and, on the screen at least, they were shining with life. I'll never forget that first time I saw them.

And then they implanted them. They were sucked up through a tube right into my uterus, where they attached and grew. I saw them at 23 days again on a screen. I loved them already. And at five weeks, I heard their healthy hearts thumping. It sounded like horses galloping across my heart and I was pretty sure then, that in eight months, we'd have healthy twins in rock-and-plays beside our bed.

I was right. They are my boys. They are healthy, athletic like their dad, and creative like me. But this is one blog post that's not about those amazing twins. This one's about the little left-behind embryos. They grew a while longer after my implantation and then a blastocyst developed. (That's a bunch of cells that are just starting to look different from each other.) That little one was frozen at that point and he/she became an insurance plan, of sorts, for us, in case the pregnancy had failed. On that day of freezing, our embryo became one of over a

million of such embryos that are in storage in many freezers across the United States and in many places around the world.

And so there was the drawer that kept on stirring my soul; sometimes making it boil up to demand attention and yet silent enough to let me walk past the counter and continue on with my responsibilities. On some days, there were momentary sad feelings and, on many days, I felt guilty. I'd go through the days of our infertility over and over and tell myself that we'd invested a lot of money and time and emotion into this arduous process. We certainly did nothing intentionally to have embryos in this suspended mode....Did we?

I'd then think about having more children. I'd almost decide to go and implant the embryo. But then some crisis or sickness or needy child would make me think twice about putting off my career goals for yet a few more years while my home responsibilities kept increasing. I was thinking and thinking and, finally, I decided to do what I should have done three years ago—have an honest conversation with Levan about our family.

So one morning in October, after the kids had gone to school, I brought it up. I was amazed at his matter-of-factness. (He is a man.) He did not want any more children. He reminded me of several occasions when I'd commented that my hands were way too full, as it was. He spoke about our additional insurance costs and how the storage was going up to over 12K each year. He said this was excessive and that we needed to give them up.

I knew he was right in my soul (or I thought so), but my heart was moving past sad and becoming angry. I kept asking him and myself "How had we never even talked about this before we went on that stressful IVF journey?" When I think back about that time, I think we'd been way too concerned about a successful pregnancy and the babies to even think about what was being placed in that freezer. I just had never taken the time to think into the future to this torturous day. I might have made all the same choices, but, still, I wish I had opened the drawer much sooner.

So I opened it. I read that some families decide to give their embryos to another childless couple. It said that this adoption embryo could be either a private adoption or an open adoption. That is, along with the adoptive parents, we could choose whether or not we would ever see and know the child. But I knew that, if everything went well, this child would be our sweet biological child being raised by strangers. This child would probably look like our other children. That's just not something I was ready to think about.

The next option was to donate the embryo to research. In our minds, we knew the study of embryo development was dependent on donated eggs, but I wasn't ready to think about the scientific community experimenting on our biological offspring, either. After all, I had written in my journal about the sweet life I'd seen on that day at the clinic when I first saw the twins before implantation. I expressed this to Levan and he agreed that donating them to scientific research did not seem palatable.

We'd long ago decided not to add to our family, so we chose the last option: to have our embryo thawed and discarded. I filled out those papers and dropped them in the mail the

next morning, but not without emotions that were mixed. I thought we'd done the right thing, but I struggled as I felt conflicted and a little empty...and I still do.

I try to sort through those lingering feelings and I struggle with that, too. I still have that photo of my now five-year-old twin boys and I remember how I felt about them there in the little dish. It's hard to even explain to anyone who hasn't done IVF. It's a different kind of day in that office. It's filled with intense hope and longing, and yet it's a sterile environment with a matter-of-fact clinical feel. It's not like the first pregnancy when my husband I looked at the test at home in our bathroom and cried and hugged each other.

But still, I was witnessing the beginning of the twins' lives. They were already physically so close to each other and then the doctor placed them inside me. And we have been together ever since. I have hundreds of photos of them. I have the ultrasounds from multiple gestation visits. But I have that little picture of them in that dish, too. Looking at that again was deeply moving.

I wish we'd been better prepared for the day of decision. I want to ask everyone who's going the IVF route to have a conversation far earlier than we did. The conversation needs to happen and, for your sake, it needs to happen prior to the first appointment at the clinic. We should all be discussing these issues and supporting families that are making this very painful choice. There are a growing number of IVF cycles being performed annually in our country—now tens of thousands. Lots of mothers and fathers all end up just where we ended up. And it's a time of bewilderment—even darkness and sorrow.

I advocate for openness, but I do not wish to discuss this with friends. I encourage early decisions, but I know there are no easy answers. I hope for peace, but I will always wonder if we did the right thing. I want to talk about that child (I can say "child"? ...I thought the other two in the dish were my children. But if I say "child", am I saying something I am not ready to say?) I am trying to get people to help solve their own dilemmas lingering from IVF, while I am uncertain, myself, of the proportions and ramifications of the dilemma.

I love my life. I love my three children. I am happy and our family is a loving place. I give love in large doses and freely. But I will continue to think about that embryo. It was my possibility for a fourth child and letting go of that possibility was an unexpected loss that I will continue to mourn.

11. Read Psalm 32. It contains the infinite and eternal answer to the personal dilemma of guilt, even the guilt that arises from a legalized form of murder. I personally know many women, who have journeyed through sinful times, who are living happy productive lives in Him after following the recipe here. Remember, it was written by David, who had also broken the sixth commandment. Highlight the words that give you the most comfort from this Psalm. (...And if there is a woman who is struggling with knowing how to contact the forgiving blood of Jesus for peace and rest, please contact me at byhcontest@gmail.com or speak with someone in your Digging Deep group. It's so easy to absolve the guilt in Christ.) (six lines)

Practically Speaking:

This month there's a plan developing for us to go, as a Digging Deep group, to the March for Life in Washington DC, near the end of January 2021. We plan to stay together in DC the night before, have a time of fellowship and worship together and then march together the last Friday of January. Watch the Digging Deep facebook page for details and updates. Attend this event with us...

OR

Follow this event in the news and pray daily this month for its effectiveness.

Chapter 7: It's Fashionable to Break This One

Thou shalt not Commit Adultery.

“As we each celebrate with our families...I will be thinking of you.”

“I can't imagine my life without you...even if I have to share you.”

“I can't imagine not having you in my life. Let's start living our lives for 'us.'”

Unbelievably, these are captions on greeting cards made especially for adulterers. They're celebratory of the breaking of the seventh commandment and they've made a successful business for Cathy Gallagher of Bethesda, Maryland.

Adultery itself is a popular venture today. Conservative estimates are that about 15 percent of married women and 22 percent of married men have cheated. Some studies have the figures nearer the 50 percent mark. It's hard to tell exactly, however, because people who are not displaying integrity in their marriages are likely not going to display it in a survey *about* their marriages. Whatever, the case, the initial statistics are too low because they do not include those who are actually living in adulterous marriages. (Yes. *Adulterous* is an adjective that may correctly modify *marriage* and it fits hundreds of thousands of marriages in America today. (More about that later in the lesson).

1. Like David's adultery with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 that we examined last month, most adultery is generally preceded by reckless risk-taking and tactical spiritual errors that could have, if avoided, lessened the likelihood of adultery. List the things that David should have done differently before the actual act of adultery.
2. This may be the most practically important part of the lesson today. Let's brainstorm and list some precautions that married women can take to build fences around the sanctity of their marriages. (Of course, men can do the same, but this lesson is for women. What can we do?) Let's think about different categories as we formulate these rules for ourselves. Let's be personal and practical and specific. Just do your best and then group discussion can be a great finisher!

Dress (Read I Timothy 2)

Social Media (Read I Corinthians 6)

Business Activities (Read Leviticus 20)

Hospitality (Read I Thessalonians 4:1-7 and 2 Samuel 13)

Conversation (Read Colossians 3:8 and 4:6; Proverbs 6:24)

Body Language (Read Proverbs 5 and Proverbs 6: 25-29)

3. Is an adulterous marriage a real *thing* in the Bible?

- a. Read Malachi 2, for starters, and see how God feels about divorce. Cite that passage here:
- b. What does that sentence about violence and a garment mean? Read a reputable commentator for a judgment about meaning. I believe it means that men had dealt violent blows to the wives of their youth in the divorce itself, and now they were going about with new women, while hiding that transgression of the past. In the context, were they also trying to act religious *while* committing adultery? Does this happen in our religious circles today? Was it happening in 1 Corinthians 5? What about in Revelation 2?
- c. Now, let's read the New Testament teachings on divorce and remarriage. Make any notes as you go:

Mark 10:11,12

Luke 16:18^[L]_[SEP]

John 4:16-18

I Corinthians 7:10-11

Matthew 19:1-12

- d. Jesus significantly altered the law of Moses in Matthew 19. Cite this specific passage. Some say Matthew 19 was for those under the law of Moses only. Explain why this could not be the case.
- e. Jesus set apart the sin of *porneia* (fornication) in Matthew 19:9 as more serious than other sins. What is *porneia* from your Greek lexicon?
- f. From 1 Corinthians 7, name the reason given for every man having his own wife. Does this reason contain the word *porneia*? Is it difficult to understand the meaning of *porneia* in 1 Corinthians 7? Explain.
- g. Is there some sense in which Paul also singled out the sin of *porneia* as being different from other sins in 1 Corinthians 6? Explain.
- h. Is fornication a physical act in Matthew 19:9? Is the adultery of the heart in Matthew 5:28 a physical act? How do you know?

While we are on Matthew 5:28, let's notice here that Jesus is, once again, wanting the heart. **This is our premise thread through these lessons. If we love him with all of our hearts (the first commandment), will we be guilty of marital unfaithfulness? Explain.**

- i. Marriage can be *marriage* and still be an adulterous union. Read Romans 7:1-3 and note the citation for this point. Then Read Mark 6: 7-30. To whom was Herod

- married? What price did John the Baptist pay for essentially calling this marriage adultery?
- j. Is the claim that you can marry someone unlawfully and then repent, remain in the marriage, and be pleasing to God in that second marriage a “fit” with Mark 6? Why or why not? Read Colossians 3:5-7 at this point and define the word *mortify* or *put to death* from your lexicon. Also notice from verse seven that the sins listed were sins in which it was possible to *live*.
 - k. In Matthew 19, what was the reaction of the people who heard the teaching *live and in person*? Should we be shocked that the world does not like this teaching? Explain.
 - l. Prove from Mark 10 that the teaching of Matthew 19:9 applies to both genders.
4. Read the book of Hosea. As you do so, peruse a good commentary to answer questions that you may have. I love *The Prophets* by Wayne Jackson (Christian Courier, Publications, Volume 4); but the Matthew Henry commentary is free online here: (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/hosea/1.html>). I was even impressed by the succinct help given in the literary *Cliff's Notes*, free online here: (<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/o/old-testament-of-the-bible/summary-and-analysis/hosea>) For a secular source, these Cliff's Notes were not bad. Any of these or others you may have will be helpful in answering the questions below with more clarity.
- a. To which kingdom does Hosea write? This is the most poignant Biblical example of the spiritual parallel of physical adultery. What is spiritual adultery? What is represented by the unfaithful wife of Hosea?
 - b. Read about the king, Jeroboam II, in 1 Kings 12:25ff and in 1 Kings 14:16. This is the king under which Hosea was called to prophesy. What kind of woman was Hosea commanded to marry? Do you believe she already fit that bill, *before* their marriage or that she was called this because she was to become such? Explain.
 - c. What did the adultery of Gomer represent according to chapter 2?
 - d. Who is represented by Hosea as he tries to woo his wife back to him?
 - e. What did he have to do to get her back in chapter 3? What was the price paid for her?
 - f. Look at 3:3. Gomer had to refrain from sexual activity for many days before being fully reclaimed. Did Israel have to do without some things for many days before being reclaimed? What things?
 - g. Do a little research on Baal worship during the era of Hosea's prophecy. What kinds of sexual activities were involved?

- h. The last half of Hosea 7 is about the propensity of Israel to offer some rote form of oblation to God, *while* fraternizing with the pagans around them. What picture did God use to represent this? List ways in which the church today may sometimes also be characterized by God in this way. Be practical and specific in this list. While thinking about this, memorize James 4:4.
- i. On their way to captivity, what word pictures were used to portray the spiritual adulterers in Hosea 8:8-10. Which picture is most similar to an adulteress?
- j. Cite verses in chapter 10 in which hope was still offered to the unfaithful nation. Where do we see the hope of the Messiah in chapter 11? Is the Messiah the ultimate “buying back” price for the spiritual adulterers (Israel)? Comment on this.
- k. Wayne Jackson in his commentary on Hosea closes with these profound words:

Perhaps recognizing the enigmatical nature of the words provided by the Spirit of God (1 Peter 1:10-12) the prophet challenged his readers, and even generations to come, to fathom these profound truths, to be wise and attempt to understand them. The devout must recognize that the Lord’s ways are always right. Whether we understand them or not. Those who are “just” will walk in them. The dishonest transgressors, ever anxious too find fault with the Creator and His actions, stumble and fall into consequences that are eternal. They labor under the impression that they are able to judge Him, instead of the reverse being true.

- 5. See if you can find five references to spiritual adultery in the book of Jeremiah. It’s interesting that Hosea is called the weeping prophet of Israel as Jeremiah is to Judah. (This might be difficult for some of us without reading the entire book, so, if you do not find them. be sure to catch the group discussion!)
- 6. Finally let’s tie physical adultery to the spiritual adultery in this way:

Some have posited that God allowed the fornication exception for divorce and remarriage because His people had shown Him the hurt of spiritual adultery...i.e. He knows how much that hurts, so he allows a future of happiness to those who have endured that. Perhaps, on the other hand, He gave us the picture of fornication/adultery as being elevated in its seriousness and grievousness, so that we could better grasp what we do to *Him* when we place other gods before Him and commit spiritual adultery. Was it for our happiness in this life or for our faithfulness toward the next? Which do you think, and why?

Practically Speaking:

Research the frequency of affairs occurring because of online introductions and contacts. How does online conversation lower the threshold in ways and make flirting or developing emotional attachments “easier”? Make some notes and present these to a ladies class or in a devotional

group along with scriptural warnings about playing with fire. (There's a really good warning about that fire in Proverbs 6!)

OR

Write an encouraging note to a friend or sister (or both) who has suffered the break-up of her home due to her husband's unfaithfulness. Encourage her to stay the course as part of the bride of Christ whose groom is forever faithful!

Chapter 8: Right up to the Cross

Thou Shalt Not Steal.

I was speaking to a friend not too long ago whose daughter had just gotten home from a birthday party. Her coat pocket bulging, her mom pulled out a frosting-laden princess; obviously a cake topper that had been sitting in thick pink icing. “Did they give you this?” the mom said suspiciously. (After all...who gives a kid a glob of frosting for her pocket?).

“No, I saw it and I loved it, so I took it. But it’s okay because no one saw me.”

“But God saw you take it.”

“Well, I thought about that, but it’s a cloudy day, so I don’t think so.”

And that’s how a four-year-old expresses the temptation and offense that’s at one point or another, in some way, been a part of all of our stories.

Sometimes we think we’re in the clear. “I don’t steal.” Let’s take a closer look at this, the eighth commandment, in view of our place in a world that’s so dependent on what really belongs to God. Let’s think about stewardship, work, possessions and selflessness; all in the context of the supremacy and mercy of God.

1. It’s nine o’clock in the morning as I am writing. I’m in a hotel and looking back at the morning, which has really just begun, I’m taken aback by how pervasively the principle of ownership and the violations in society of the laws of possession impact our day to day lives. I’m working on a device that has a password for every activity and then a security system to prevent stolen passwords for each one. It’s with great difficulty that most of us keep up with passwords and internet security. There’s a security code on my bank card. There’s an extra security lock on this hotel room door and I made sure it was in place this morning before getting in the shower. I had to sign in to the breakfast area in this hotel because there are those who will come to get breakfast even though they are not guests. There’s a tornado-ravaged area nearby and a lot of the manpower is having to be expended currently on security; to attempt to insure that those whose homes and businesses have been largely destroyed, do not lose everything else to theft. It’s Super Tuesday and millions of dollars have been spent to try and insure that voter fraud does not occur. My husband has been working diligently on paying our taxes this week, but the process is extremely laborious because of the need to verify every single deduction, every gift, and every paycheck because so many people are in the tax fraud business. My children are trying to buy a house, but the red-tape that protects buyers and sellers and realtors and banks from fraud, is almost endless. I push the remote lock on my car, usually more than once, when I leave it in a lot. I listen to make sure I hear the lock beep. I panic if I leave my phone or keys in a public restroom. If I’m getting rid of a credit card, I feel the need to cut it into many pieces. I have three locks on my front door. We have security teams, cameras and alarm systems in our church buildings and we don’t let our kids out of our sight in public. Some have travel clothing with inside pockets for valuables and some have jewelry that they never wear because of theft risks.

If you're an adult, you've had something stolen. For me, it has been a dryer-full of my jeans when I was in college, a go-cart from my yard, a giant pumpkin from my porch, a bunch of electronics from my car, and an expensive camera from my seat in a theme park. On occasion, we've had illegal copying of our intellectual materials or people who made promises to pay back loans, never meaning to keep those promises. All are forms of stealing and these are just a few examples of an almost infinite list of varieties. Our world and responsibilities are radically different today because of the sin in the garden, its perpetuity in our world, and its radical effect on our ownership/stewardship. Try to imagine a world in which you have absolutely no fear of anything that belongs to you being taken by someone else; your good name, your possessions, your test answers, your children, your right to discipline them, your husband, your privacy, your freedom, etc...etc... and you'll be challenged. It's a foreign and very difficult environment and peace to even imagine. Our worldview and basic strategies of living are profoundly influenced by this aspect of sin in our lives and in the world around us. Studying this will make us want to be more careful to cleanse our lives of all theft; all types and all degrees. **Like all the other relationship commands, the key is being wholly given over to loving the Lord above all other gods. The key to being confident in obeying the sixth commandment, which is also a command in the new covenant, is developing a heart that places God on the throne, ruling all material possessions.**

2. Think for a moment about the concept of socialism (a big and controversial discussion in our country, as I am writing) . The oversimplification of it is that government redistributes wealth so that everyone has the same amount of wealth. Is this a divinely mandated system? Can you think of passages in the Old and New Testaments that prove that it is not sinful for some to be wealthy as they apply the principles of Exodus 20:3 and Matthew 6:33 to their lives and wealth? Look for passages about the wealth of Abraham, Isaac, Job, Joseph, Philemon, a wealthy Roman centurion, and Cornelius. Note these.
3. Now answer this: If wealth was redistributed so that all people had the same amount, how long could the arrangement possibly sustain? Why?
4. Read the book of Malachi and find out how people commonly rob God? Can you think of other ways?
5. Having done the above exercise, can you think of passages that show us that being wealthy presents very difficult challenges for God's people? Let's read the following example accounts and make notes about the dangers of riches that we can see from real events:

Nabal. Read I Samuel 25. Was Nabal a man of means? Was he a man of selfishness? Cite passages.

Saul. Was he rich before becoming king? Read I Samuel 9 to answer. Read I Samuel 13-15. Cite a passage there that would indicate that both his wealth and acclaim continued to grow. Did his accumulation of wealth and power make him content; less likely to steal? See if you can think of things he stole after becoming king.

Remember, stealing is taking that to which we have no right. List at least a couple of things he illegitimately grabbed from these chapters.

Solomon. Read 2 Chronicles 1, 2 Chronicles 9, 1 Kings 4 and 1 Kings 10 and list the details of Solomon's wealth given in these passages. Did he become a better person as a result of the material blessings given him?

Review Deuteronomy 17 and list the commands there that were already broken in the accumulation of wealth.

Then read the entire book of Ecclesiastes, in which the philosophies of a materialist ("Nothing is valuable, since our common end is death...") are set forth. Highlight the verses in this book that refer to riches or wealth from the point of view of a fatalist (Look it up if you're not sure!). Look also for the principle that wealth gained is never enough, for the materialist or fatalist. Cite any here:

Look at 1 Kings 10 and list the riches of Solomon. This is what is referenced in Ecclesiastes 2 as being *vanity*.

Then read and digest chapter 12 of Ecclesiastes....It's a whole new way of looking at life, altered by the fact that there's a Creator and eternal sustainer of life. Make notes here:

In this connection, also read Luke 12:1-30. Write out verse 21 and put it on the refrigerator this month. If you have a refrigerator and there are leftovers in there, you are one of the ones who is rich. Are you rich toward God?

Ahab. Read 1 Kings 21. Did being wealthy make Ahab less likely to covet or steal? The Biblical historicity of Ahab's life is confirmed outside of Scripture. There are written documents by Shalmaneser III of Assyria that give credence to the reign of Ahab. Shalmaneser documented in 853 BC that Ahab, as part of an alliance of kings, defeated another alliance of kings. Ahab was wealthy and powerful. What did he steal and how did he do it in this chapter of the Bible?

The rich young ruler. Read Mark 10:17-22. List some good qualities of this young man. What was the *strangling* characteristic—the one that choked out the influence of His goodness? Could he have been a lawyer who was obedient to all of the law with this *strangle* in his life? Sometimes we are confronted with choices that make plain our priorities in the placement of material things. If people are keeping the first commandment, they will be keeping the eighth. We should be thankful for those confrontations and choose the right path.

I have a friend who woke up on one amazing day to realize that her husband had invented something that was to be sold to a large corporation and that her life would change, in that one moment, from a life of average means to a life of incredible wealth. Her first response was to weep. "How can I handle this responsibility and be sure that I maintain

the principles of righteousness that I've tried to follow to this point?" Read the following proverbs for an understanding of why a faithful Christian might feel this completely counter-cultural fear of wealth.

Proverbs 6:10,11,
8:18,20-21;
10:4;
11:4,16;
12:9;
13:7,22
14:23
15:27
16:8
18:11
21:5
22:1,7
28: 6,8,11,22
31:11

Now make a list of ten principles from these proverbs which will help us develop the right heart about material things; those of ourselves and of others.

6. Use a concordance or Bible dictionary and find these examples of people who stole. Write one lesson from each of them:

Rachel
Achan
Micah
Joseph's brothers

7. Read Ephesians 4. Write out the verse that demonstrates the connection of a good work ethic with the ability to resist the temptation of stealing.

8. Let's take a look at the specific laws regarding theft under the old covenant. Re-read Exodus 22 and make any notes.

9. Read Psalm 50 and find the verse that speaks about being an accessory to theft.

Finally, look at the cross. How close was thievery to the cross? What was the difference in the two thieves? Is there any sense in which most of us of us are thieves, on one cross or the other? Were the thieves on those crosses any more guilty of theft than the Jews who demanded the crucifixion of the Lord? Let's talk about this in our group discussion.

Practical Application

There are several "isms" that are kinds of theft, some more directly than others. Included are thefts from Divinity, plagiarism, voyeurism, vandalism, deism, atheism, agnosticism, narcissism, nepotism, racism, materialism and humanism. I know you can think of more. Try to

think of how each one of these would rob God or a fellow-human being. Look up definitions if any are unfamiliar. Examine your heart and pray that you will be clean of any of these things that distract from the glory of God. Then think of the wealthiest person you know. Write his/her name here. Is he/she the most contented person you know? Has wealth made a difference in his/her life? Is the difference for the good or for the bad? Write out Mark 10:25. Find it and cite it in two other gospels. 8 lines

OR

Keep tabs this month on how much you spend on cosmetics, fashion, entertainment and eating out. Compare this with how much you are giving to the Lord's church during the same period. Make sure you are diligent in keeping those receipts for recording. You can easily keep track on your phone. Make sure you are content as you compare these two numbers. Try to discern whether you are giving sacrificially. 8 lines

Resources:

<https://www.biblestudy.org/bible-study-by-topic/proverbs/wealth.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurkh_Monoliths

Chapter 9: A Law both Broken and Kept at the Cross

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

This is the chapter I've been dreading. That's because it is so hard for me to be completely truthful all the time. Truth be told (no pun intended), there's not a person who's walked the face of the earth who's gotten truth right every single time. But that's got to be the goal for us, as people who walk in truth (3 John 4).

Sometimes at night, I can think back on my day and realize that I've done linguistic gymnastics to try and *not* say what was reality. Maybe someone asked me a consequential question and I pretended I did not hear it. Maybe Ezra, one of my grandchildren, asked me if I love their Papa more than I love Ezra... and I dodged. Perhaps a friend, who is very needy, asked me if I thought people sometimes avoided hanging out with her. Sometimes it is consequential truth and sometimes it's *more* consequential truth. There's no inconsequential lie. Truth makes us uncomfortable sometimes. Sometimes, truth hurts other people. Sometimes truth convicts and sometimes it relieves. Telling a lie is sometimes so much easier. Being quiet while someone else is deceived is even simpler than speaking a lie.

The other day, my daughter called to tell me that someone had colored, with a crayon, all over the back of one of the doors in their house (the house they had already sold to someone else). "They are both denying it," she said, "...and I'm having a hard time knowing who is lying."

Of course, she knew that a lie had to be punished, but getting to the bottom of it and especially the *right* bottom for that spanking was important. She let me FaceTime with them for a moment. (Now I usually don't get up in her discipline business, but this pregnancy, a move, a need to find a place to live and the flu had just about put her over the edge.) So, both of the kids were sitting in chairs right beside one another and could not get up until the truth was known. I had an idea, this time, that the liar was Colleyanna, the three-year-old. (She is the one who loves art...Having to use a crayon, to Ezra, the five-year-old, is almost a punishment in itself.) I looked her in the eyes, as close as I could get to the screen and quoted, from the Simplified Mammy Version, Revelation 21:8. Up to this point, we'd been talking a lot about heaven and very little about the reality of hell. But this day, I told her that the devil is so very bad that he would like to burn people; that he loves His place of fire and he is going to make very sure that all people who tell lies have to go to a place of fire and stay in that fire if they do not change their minds and decide to always tell the truth. But God wants us to be in heaven with him where we are safe and happy and nothing can hurt us. To go there, though, we have to be people who love and tell the truth. We say things the way they really are."

"Now Colleyanna, you must tell the truth....Did you color on the..."

But she interrupted. "I don't want to go in the fire. Maybe I colored on the door."

Colleyanna's problem is the same as yours and mine. Sometimes we think telling the truth is just not telling as much of a lie. Somewhere between the "yes" and "no", there's a "maybe" and we salve our consciences by thinking that we tell *mostly* the truth. (We got this little situation

worked out and no one required intensive therapy as a result. She is, however, at this writing, pretty determined to tell the truth.)

Let's think about the truth this month. First, let's notice different ways we can *bear false witness*.

1. The first way is an obvious way. We can deliberately speak things about another person or event that we know to be false. Have you ever thought about the fact that when Peter told that lie, right before the rooster crowed, he was not just speaking a falsehood about Himself? He was bearing false witness against the Lord! He was verbally agreeing that Jesus really should be over there suffering the beating and mocking, the trial and, finally, the crucifixion. He was on the side of those bearing false witness against the Lord.

When Abraham lied to the king in Genesis 12, against whom was he bearing false witness? (Who was he hurting?)

When Isaac lied to his father in Genesis 27, against whom was the deceit? Sometimes the victims are multiple.

When the brothers of Joseph lied in Genesis 37, against whom were they telling this lie? (Who were they hurting?)

When Potiphar's wife lied in Genesis 39, against whom was she bearing false witness?

Very often, lying is not just against my own eternal well-being. It is almost always against someone else, as well.

2. The next way we can bear false witness is when we spread unverified rumors. Sometimes this happens in the body and, sadly, sometimes this happens against faithful teachers of the word. Should Christians assume that a slanderous rumor is false until proven true? What questions should you ask about your rumor before speaking something negative about someone? Make a list and we will discuss in our group discussion. Should the golden rule of Matthew 7:12 be back of one of these questions?
3. Does going to court with a brother hurt someone even if the accusation we level is true? Who does this hurt? Read 1 Corinthians 6 and make any notes here: Would this court case of brother-against-brother hurt those mentioned in verse 6?
4. Is there a sense in which we bear false witness against Christ if we do so against a brother or sister? Offer Biblical evidence.
5. What part does Matthew 18:12-17 play in helping us avoid bearing false witness?
6. Are there ways to lie without actually coming right out and saying words that are untrue? Make a list of ways this can be done. If you can think of Bible examples, cite them. I hope you can come up with at least five ways/examples. I'll start you off:

- a. Tamar effectively lied by dressing up as a harlot in Genesis 38. We can lie by our appearance.
8. Lying is promoted by some big ideas and industries in our country. Dr. Laura Schlessinger posits five of them in her book called called *The Ten Commandments*. Here they are:

Individualism (in this case, another word for serving self): “If it serves me, it is good.”

Free speech: We’ve really stretched this concept to mean that we have freedom to criticize the powers that be and the symbols of that power to any degree and with any expression, no matter how destructive.

Entertainment: Media experts tell us it’s the individual’s responsibility to figure out what’s true and what’s not. The paparazzi has a pass on truth-telling, too.

Free enterprise: It’s expected that advertisers will exaggerate claims.

The blessing of a free state: Rights trump responsibility. Fewer and fewer consequences exist for more and more negative behaviors.

I would add one more. I believe **social media** is a big arena where misrepresentation, false accusations, and deceit are wreaking havoc like nowhere else. Extramarital affairs, bullying, depression, and dishonor to parents are all extremely destructive by-products of feeling safe and distanced from consequences of online deceit. Note here a couple of scenarios in which social media has effectively destroyed a relationship because of deceit or even through deceitful secret online relationships, photos or texts. I know that you are seeing this if you have any social media presence. (I think I could list dozens of instances!)

9. Before we go into the primarily textual part of the study, I want to emphasize the importance of parenting that banishes lying. I’m convinced that every child will lie at some point. (I read in a book that “foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child.”) Your child will see the benefits of escaping punishment, the flourish of looking important in the eyes of peers, the acclaim that’s in having accomplished some unbelievable feat. Your child will one day just tell you a “whopper.” Expect this.

But your response has got to be twice as big as the lie. I mean lying gets a quicker response, a graver look, and a harsher, larger punishment than any other infraction. Families, marriages, communities, and churches fall apart when there is no trust. Your child cannot be saved if he/she grows up to be a hardened liar. So it’s really important to expel this sin when it rears its ugly head and every single time it rears it. In other news, there will come a day when you’ll be hard-pressed to know if your child is lying; so catch it while you can. You can know your child defaced the wall beside her crib with a tube of lipstick when she is two years old, if she is your only child. So don’t act like you believe that lie about the mermaid who came in the room. Pretending along with a lie is a very irresponsible parenting move. I’ve also learned recently that it might be a better idea to say “lie” when punishing instead of

“telling a story”. Kids could get that all mixed up with the untruths that are in fairy tales. Those are not lies. They are fairy stories (which, by the way, can often be great teaching tools about lying as in “The Boy who Cried Wolf” by Hans Christian Anderson). Have a Titus 2:3-5 discussion, in a small group, throwing out ideas for stopping the lying problem when it first begins; before it’s an immoral way of life in your home. Take notes here:

10. Now, for the rest of this month’s study, read the book of John. I know, if you were along for the study last year, you will be repeating a read; but, for our purpose, it will be worth the repeat. Let’s pause for reflection and answer a question or two each time we come to the word *truth*. I think these reflections will help us to be more diligent in keeping our lips from guile (I Peter 3:10).

1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Last year we studied *kabod* (Hebrew) and *doxa* (Greek)—words often translated *glory*. We learned that God’s glory is the manifestation or display of all of His attributes. Which two attributes does the Spirit say were on a full display when God was made flesh?

The attributes here are *aletheia* and *charis*. Write synonyms from your lexicon for both of these attributes.

Think about the balance that grace gives to truth. Truth does not bend. It ever stays the same. It is unyielding and does not allow for shortcomings. His grace makes it possible for us to attain to the standards of perfect truth by His sacrifice.

1:17,18 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared him.

Here we see that Moses gave the law. Complete forgiveness wasn’t possible through the law alone without the fleshly witness and death of Jesus. Jesus was bearing witness to men of things we could not see. Did He bear false witness or was He full of truth? Was the old law full of truth? Was it full of grace? Write Romans 8:2 here.

3:21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

Aletheia is something we can *do* and when we *do* truth (what is true), people can clearly see that we are bearing true witness of God. If our lives are like Jesus, people see the Father in us.

Write Matthew 5:16 here:

John 4:23,24 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

We worship in both spirit and truth. It’s interesting here that Jesus’ glory consists of both grace and truth; the truth being the doctrine and the grace being the attribute that is lovingkindness and mercy for us. So we look to these attributes and respond by respecting both. We worship in truth, respecting the doctrine—the laws of worship. We worship in spirit, moved by the kindness and mercy He has shone in giving us that Word in the flesh. There are binary attributes of glory and binary responses in worship. Give an example here of an act of worship and explain how we do both in that part of our worship:

5:31-39 If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

This reference to truth is very directly about bearing true witness. Read it carefully and list the four who bore witness that Jesus was truth (a four-fold witness). four lines

8:32 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

This is an amazing passage because Jesus had just made some believers of truth (Himself). But those carping Pharisees, in a conversation with *the* Truth, about the truth, turned right around and said something wildly false: that they had never been in bondage! Which nations can you name to whom they had been in bondage since the life of Abraham? To whom were they in bondage now? They stood in front of personified divine Truth and chose prideful false witnessing. How might people do a similar thing today? 7 lines

8:39-45 They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.” Then they said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God.” Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not

understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.

This is an amazing passage. These Jews were about to pick up a stone to throw at the Lord (the Truth). Jesus just continues to speak truth to them and to contrast this truth with the lies of their father. Who was their father and how did the Lord describe or name him? It's interesting to think about how there is no middle ground. We are of the Father (Truth) or we are of the father of false witness. Cindy Colley is the child of one or the other at this moment. Jesus is going to tell us how we know which is our father before the book of John is completed.

8:46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?

The witness borne demands a verdict. Christ had a fourfold witness that spoke truth. Jesus was asking this jury of liars if there was anyone who could convict Him of sin. What was their response to Truth?

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Jesus once again claims to be truth. To get to a destination (heaven, where Christ just said He was going), there must be a way—a path blazed. There must be truth—information on how to get there. And, finally, there must be life—some entity (energy) that keeps the traveler alive. Who was/is all of these three things to get us to the throne? How did He make a path when we had none? Write Hebrews 2:10 here.

How did he give us the information (roadmap of truth) to go there? Write John 14: 16,17 here.

How was Jesus the life-giver? (Remember, the life is in the blood! [Leviticus 17:11]) Write Romans 6:4 here:

How does it become more clear that we cannot get there without Him?... "No man comes to the Father, but by me."

John 14:17...the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Jesus would not leave them without the comfort of hope; the way to Himself. What did the Spirit come to do? (The answer is in 16:13.) What is the result that we have today?

John 15:26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

Who were the original 4 witness-bearers at the beginning of this book? Who else bears true witness? And what is this witness about? Is this the fifth person/entity, then, to bear witness of the veracity of Christ?

16:7-13 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

I love this passage because it guarantees that we, today, have all of the truth. The apostles did not have all of the truth at this time. They had the Son, in the flesh, bearing witness of the Father. They had the Father, through the Old Testament law and prophets, bearing witness of the Son. But they did not have the Spirit yet. We, the most blessed ones, have the written inerrant complete Witness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are living in the glory days! We can put every false witness to the test! Who is the ruler of this world? What lies ahead for him because he is a false witness and the True Witness is now complete?

John 17:17-19 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

What sets us apart for His holy purposes? If there is no truth, there is no need to be any different from the world. What is the final product—what we hold—of truth? Who is responsible for us (has gifted us with the privilege of) holding it? Be thoughtful about this and look back up at 14:26 and 16:7-13. Where was the crowning sanctification of Jesus performed? Did every Old Testament sacrifice require sanctification?

John 18:37-38 Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?”

Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, “I find no fault in Him at all.

This was a pivotal moment in the trial of Jesus. Someone was bearing false witness. (The breaking of commandment #9 was alive and well at the mock trial of Jesus, where the accusation toward Jesus was that He was breaking the law. Read Mark 14:55,56.) Was it

Jesus who was the false witness or was He the absolute and perfect Truth? That's a rhetorical question, so we will answer: He was already the Truth and he was just about to make a way to heaven for us and give us eternal life (way, truth, life). Was Pilate complicit in bearing false witness? Explain.

John 19:35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.

This last reference to truth in this book is John, himself, bearing true witness to the fact that the side of Jesus was pierced; that he saw the blood and water. John was close to the cross at the time of the crucifixion. How do we know that? Why was it important that he testified this truth about the side of Jesus? Did the prophets of the Old Testament bear true witness and is that relevant here? Good discussion!

11. While we are at the cross, let's reflect a little bit on the irony. In their accusations that Jesus had blasphemed their law, they broke (violated) a majority of the ten commandments in the trial/crucifixion process. Which ones did they break and how did they break them? 12 lines

Practically Speaking:

Make a list of five things you see this week when you are in the grocery store or at the mall or the gym or the ball field or opening your mail at home or in your email inbox —things that shout to you that we live in a culture of deceit. You might start with the front of a tabloid as you stand in a check-out line at the grocery. (Really?... *New Vitamin Cigarettes will Add Years to Your Life!*) If you live anywhere near Alabama, you might start with the sheer numbers of billboards about injury attorneys as you drive. Fraudulent claims are a routine part of the burden of the court system. (I have a friend whose full-time job is to catch those who intentionally destroy property and subsequently claim, for insurance collections, that a storm or disaster was the culprit.) You get the point. See how many obvious stretches, empty promises and outright lies you see going unchallenged in a day. It will be interesting to share our lists. The serious part of the assignment is to go back and read Revelation 21:8. It's there for a reason and it calls us to sanctification and to recall the ninth commandment, which is restated in many ways in our new covenant. Remember, we serve THE Truth.

Resources:

Schlessinger, Dr. Laura, and Stuart Vogel; *The Ten Commandments*, Cliff Street-Harper Collins, New York, NY, 1998, pp.269-270

Chapter 10: The other Side of this Commandment Sandwich

Thou shalt not covet.

Some have tried to neatly divide the decalogue into two categories, the first half being about relationship with God and the second half being about interactions with our fellowmen. I get that and, in a sense, the decalogue does flow that way: four commands about devotion to God, one about family, and five about how we view and treat others. But, in a deeper sense, they are all about a heart for Him. They are about the denial of self and the pursuit of righteousness. Everything he asked Israel to do or refrain from doing in this list, was His heart wanting what was best for His people and His desire that His chosen people give Him their undivided affection. He wanted them to realize that His guidance was not a high-handed power grab on the part of a selfish God. (He already reigned sovereign in power and ownership of the creation of His own hand.) Rather, the list given in the decalogue was an amazingly succinct list of contentment catalysts. They are commandments, but they are commandments given, not as though we could bring God something He needed by keeping the list. They were the security of the Jews against the pain, chaos and destruction that unrighteousness brings on societies. And the keeping of the law was only possible when the heart was given over to Him, first and completely. Thus, the first commandment: Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

The first and last commandments—the bindings of the decalogue—are obviously about the interior of man. All the rest, with the possible exception of the fifth commandment are outward responses to the commitment of the deepest inner being. The decalogue is eight rules sandwiched between two mammoth heart capitulations. And the first heart surrender—making Jehovah the first priority in every relationship and decision—informs every rule and even informs this last heart training requirement: Thou shalt not covet.

1. The Hebrew word is *hamad*. Look it up and write its definition:

When I was in the second grade, I attended a very small Christian school. I was being taught straight from the great Book every day and we had a worship assembly for the entire student body each day, as well. My teacher, Mrs. Bryant, began our day with prayer and, in addition to our Bible class that included weekly memorization, she read us a Bible story each day from Egermeier's Bible story book. I was in the right place for spiritual growth and I made 100 on all of my memory work.

But I had a secret life of 2nd grade covetousness going on. Two of the girls in my class, Pam and Melinda, took piano lessons. They had leather pouches with zippers and inside they had colorful music books. There was a special place in the cloak room where they got to store their pouches every Tuesday so they could go to piano lessons in the old kindergarten building directly after school. They talked about the music teacher and they sometimes beat out their little chords on their desks. They loved piano lessons.

It was a world that my friends knew that I did not know. It gave them a sort of second-grade eliteness that I desired. So I found a little blue pouch with a zipper at home. I took it and I tore out the music pages of my "Highlights for Children" magazine and stuffed them into

the pouch along with a hymnbook from off our bookshelf. I took the pouch to school with me and I put it in the special place in the cloakroom and I told my friends that I took piano lessons, too. I made up the name of a teacher “that I loved” and fabricated a time and place where I received these lessons. (We did not even own a piano). I wanted to be like Pam and Melinda. I wanted what they had and I wanted it badly enough to lie and pretend about it all. I desired the status, the “big-girl-ness” and the popularity that I was sure would come with piano lessons. While learning to recite the ten commandments, I coveted. It was about the zippered bag and the hymn book and the spoken lie, but it was mostly about my heart. Something was more important to me, in the second grade, than doing what I knew, even at that age, was pleasing to God. My heart was in the wrong place.

2. Covetousness breeds deceit; not just in the second grade, but in the church. When church leaders and teachers get their hearts in the wrong place about possessions, it’s a short step from passions for material goods and softening or “changing the truth.” Read 2 Peter 2 and find evidence of this. While you are thinking about this, note also an example of the quick trail from covetousness to deceit in recent political, business, social or criminal news columns. Comment here:
3. Some have posited that the tenth commandment is a prohibition of all desires for material things. I cannot believe this to be true. Our desires to have material possessions, of course, must be tempered by overriding principles of the heart that are all over Scripture. I must seek the kingdom first (Matthew 6:33). I must seek my fellow’s well being before my own (1 Corinthians 10:24). I must love my neighbor as myself (Luke 10:27). If I’m doing all of these things, I’ll be working constantly to be sure that material things are tools to accomplish spiritual goals rather than goals in themselves. However, the very wording of Exodus 20:17 and its conciseness say that this particular command of the law has to do with my wanting something that belongs to someone else. Write the verse here and then note two obvious Biblical examples of covetousness from the Old Testament. There are dozens.

I’ll never forget that, when I was a child, an elderly woman I knew would often say “I wish I had that dress and she had one that was twice as nice and pretty.” Is this a good way to wish for something someone else has? (It has stuck with me, for sure.)

4. We live in a world in which collegiate-aged people, especially women, are strongly tempted to found their lives on some principles at least closely akin to covetousness. I’ve known several girls who were all about what God wanted for them as they exited high school. They had aspirations to serve Him by working to acquire all of the Titus 2:4-5 characteristics. They wanted to bring up godly children for the Lord. They wanted to be godly guardians of their homes. But then they went off to college. Sometimes they attended prestigious schools of physics or law or medicine, without really thinking about how the end game might not fit with the Titus 2 plan. They found themselves on elite campuses, borrowing lots of money, and voices began to lure them. “This is what you’re capable of. This is what you deserve. You can live the high life. You can have it all. Look around at what others are doing from this great institution. That Who’s Who acclaim that he just got? That Mercedes she just bought? That practice that Dr. X is running now. It can be yours in a few short years.” Slowly the erosion of the initial dream nears completion and she is figuring out how she can

sub-let the raising of her children and stay on the path to the acclaim and its accompaniments. What, in reality may be covetousness, is often labeled *motivation, focus, aspirations*, or even *stewardship* in our possession-crazed world. The result, spiritually, can be generationally destructive. When these cases are multiplied in communities of affluence, our churches often suffer. Explain below how you think this can occur and note the final result of veering from the principles in Titus 2:3-5. Is this a form of worldliness? Comment on this.

5. Consistency and balance is key as we think about covetousness. This question is especially for those who may be wives of ministers who are paid to do local work with a congregation. Read 1 Corinthians 9 and highlight the Spirit's permission for preachers to be paid from the church's treasury.

Then think about the passages that should make our preaching families feel a grave responsibility in their personal use of those funds. As we think about the handling of our family budgets, particularly when our families are supported by the money that's been given to the Lord, make a list of some "rules" that we might want to articulate for ourselves that would help us to be sure we do not allow covetousness to claim our budgets. Then think about how that all of our resources, preaching families or not, are really on loan from God. I'll start you off with a couple from my list:

- I'd never want to spend more on any non-necessity item, in any given month, than I spend in my giving to the church.
- I'd never want any of my spending to go toward entertainment choices that violate the moral principles my husband is, or should be preaching.
- I'd never want to spend money on anything I'd be ashamed to discuss with my elders. 15 more lines

Twice in the book of Jeremiah, he noted that the prophets and priests were guilty of covetousness. Can you find those passages? Can you think of priests in 1 Samuel that desired something to which they had no right and were cut off as a result of this and other unrestrained sins?

6. Sometimes millennials put me to shame in their attempts to be free of materialistic goals and desires. It is right for them (and all) to want our churches to be more focused on spiritual growth and evangelism than we are on buildings and numbers. However, consistency is key. Not all, or even most, but some millennials may speak about the materialism of the "establishment" while touting decisions to work with the homeless instead of attending the assembly. In view of the fact that the simple New Testament church regularly assembled and was commanded not to forsake those gatherings, this neglect of that corporate activity is not reflective of a devoted heart. Find passages to verify this:

It's further inconsistent to decry the materialism of the church when one is forsaking the assembly to work with homeless people while wearing an apple watch, holding an iPad, talking on an iPhone and wearing shoes made from plastic water bottles—shoes that cost almost two hundred dollars. None of these things are, in themselves, sinful. We just have to

be careful that, when we speak about relegating material things to a place far beneath our spiritual passions, that we are really doing that and not just becoming conformists to a different, more palatable, brand of materialism. Let me say again that it's right to caution against a pursuit of bigger and better buildings and great numbers of people while de-emphasizing the proclamation of the pure gospel and the compassion that motivates service and benevolence. Christians just have to be careful that we maintain balance. We can have both adherence to doctrine and compassion that motivates service. In fact, both are required and the two dovetail into obedient faith.

It's always wrong to criticize the body of the Lord in front of non-believers, too. I cannot successfully reach people who are unchurched and criticize the body of the Lord in their communities...the very body to which I hope to lead them.

Read Hebrews 10. From this chapter, prove that the Christians to whom Paul was writing were to be both faithful to the meeting times *and* full of good works. Note that they were even involved in ministering in a prison.

7. Psalm 119: 36 gives us an excellent way to train our minds to counter covetousness. What is that way?
8. As we conclude this month's study, let's look at covetousness in the parables of Jesus and take lessons:
 - Matthew 13. Read this chapter and pay attention to the parable of the soils. Notice verse 22. Our salvation can be choked out by the deceitfulness of wealth. How do riches deceive us? What lies do they tell us? Make a list.
 - Luke 10. Read this chapter, particularly looking at the parable of the Good Samaritan. There are three attitudes displayed in this passage about money or possessions. What are they?
 - Now read Luke 12 and think about the man with the crops and barns. Which character in the story of the Good Samaritan was he most like? Explain.
 - Now think about weddings in Luke 14. Read the chapter. The first account is about desiring a place of acclaim or privilege. What dangers are inherent in trying to look like I am important? Is covetousness a risk if this is what I'm going for? Try to think of a relevant passage in James.
 - There's really great parabolic teaching that's right on target in verses 12-14 of this same chapter. What should we *not* be looking for in our hospitality or benevolence? Is "rubbing shoulders" with the important a precursor to covetousness? Comment.
 - Read Luke 15 and think about the older brother. Was he covetous of someone's party? How do you know?
 - Matthew 20. Read the chapter and find someone in a parable who was covetous and felt an inequity.
 - Read Matthew 21 and notice the stewards who decided to kill the owner's son. Knowing that these stewards represent the Jews who killed Jesus, would you say these men were covetous of His position? See if you can find a passage that says the

Jews wanted to kill Jesus because of their envy. Are envy and covetousness close cousins?

9. Now, a few short answer questions to help us take away truths about our heart's desires:
- a. Just as we have been noting throughout this lesson, from whence did Jesus say covetousness comes in Mark 7:22?
 - b. Why did Jesus tell the disciples to beware of covetousness in Luke 12:15? Do we live in a society that has failed to beware? Give examples.
 - c. In its context of Romans 1:29, how serious is the sin of covetousness?
 - d. What are we to do with covetousness according to Colossians 3:5? What comes on people who do not do this? How does this passage tie the tenth commandment to the second one? Is covetousness a modern day manifestation of picking up a graving tool?
 - e. What can we boldly say according to Hebrews 13, if we keep our lives free from covetousness or the love of money? On what do we become dependent if we do not depend on riches?

Practically Speaking:

Ezra (my five-year-old grandson) is very excited as I write because this might be the day his family purchases their new home in the new town to which they are moving. As I write, he is traveling to look at this house. What Ezra wants is a house with stairs "...because I have never had a house with stairs and I really want one. Rich people have stairs." (Good to know.) Now, I believe we will have a couple of family Bible time lessons about wanting what other people have and associated dangers, but, for now, take the time to list five things that have tripped you up in your lifetime in the same way that a house with stairs is tripping Ezra up. Take the time to pray that your desire for material things will never be the catalyst for sin in your life. Write out Proverbs 30:7-9 below.

OR

Take a hiatus from clothes shopping this month. Purchase no new clothing or accessories this month. This might be easier for some than others. Each time you are tempted by that sale online or at the store, rather than purchasing, put two dollars into a jar and save those dollars for a donation to the food pantry for your congregation or give it, at the end of the month, to a struggling college student or a student who wants to go on a mission trip. Another option is to let your kids go shopping with it for a little surprise gift for a widow or widower or a sweet elder in your congregation.

Chapter 11: It's All or Nothing

1. Look back and review the list from Galatians that we made in the very first question of this study. If you can, make a copy of that question and bring it over to this month's study, it might be helpful. Just be familiar with the Galatians comparisons between the old law and the new. How many of the ten commandments are we under today?
2. This one is *Hebrews from A to Z*, but they're all mixed up, to keep you on your toes. Since we have already read almost all of the book of Hebrews in this study, let's do a concept search. Put your best proof of the following truths from the book of Hebrews here. Try to do this, at first, without a commentary or concordance. Then reach for help if you are stumped. This is called searching the Scriptures (John 5:39)!... (And really, the Old Law did testify of Him and that's what our Galatians list is really about.) Again, these are not in any certain order.
 - a. We are still under a law and there are requirements to be met if we are to be saved. **(I can't get this "a" to align properly.)**
 - b. Christ is better than the prophets of the Old Testament.
 - c. One sacrifice is better than many.
 - d. Those who reject the new covenant in favor of the old are without hope.
 - e. Christ is better than the angels.
 - f. Christ, as a priest, is better than the Aaronic priests.
 - g. God revealed himself in Old Testament times through prophets and angels.
 - h. Christ is God's greatest revelation; a self revelation.
 - i. Jesus had to die in order to conquer the prince of death.
 - j. Since Jesus had to die to conquer, He had to become a man, because God doesn't die.
 - k. Christ was like Melchizedek in that there was no predecessor or successor.
 - l. Christ was better than Melchizedek.
 - m. Jesus became qualified to author our salvation only when He died.
 - n. Christians can fall away and be lost.
 - o. Jesus went beyond the veil for us.
 - p. The old law could not make anything perfect.

- q. Priests, under the old law, were rotated out by death.
- r. Christ, as a high priest, occupies a permanent position.
- s. Christ, as a priest, gets to skip over the personal cleansing sacrifice.
- t. Since the cross, there are no daily blood sacrifices.
- u. Christ is the mediator of the better covenant.
- v. The priesthood changed, so the law had to have changed, as well.
- w. That which decays because of imperfections, finally vanishes away.
- x. A will is in effect after the death of the testator.
- y. Blood of bulls and goats can't take away sin.
- z. The new law is not a shadow, but the very image.

3. Re-read Matthew 5. Highlight the passage that tells us what we should *not* think about the law of Moses and about Jesus' relationship to it: This is four verses. Write them here, for easy reference:

Many believe when Jesus said he did not come to destroy the law, that He meant He did not come to abolish it. Look up the Greek word for what Jesus did not come to do and write its meanings here. Are there multiple (more than one) meanings for this word? 15 lines

Now write Romans 14:20 here. Identify this same Greek word in this passage: Underline it.

Can anyone completely abolish (obliterate) the work of God?

Can *destroy* in Romans 14:20 mean *abolish*, then?

So this word does not always mean *abolish*. It can mean *to defeat a purpose or plan*. Can we defeat a plan of God IF that plan was preferred, but conditional on our cooperation? Think of examples of this today—examples of preferred purposes of God being defeated because they were conditional on man's behavior in the first place. Make a list here:

So could the meaning of Matthew 5:17 be that Jesus did not come to defeat the purpose of the law? In fact, contextually, is that the meaning that fits? Why or why not?

4. Let's dig a little deeper into Matthew 5:17.

Everyone agrees today that at least parts of the law have been abolished. List below some parts of the law that all understand to be no longer in force. Try to list five. There are lots.

This passage makes it impossible, though, for the law to *partly* pass away. In what statement does Christ make that very clear?

In that statement, it is plain that whenever the law passes away, it will *all* do so at the same time. We are either under the whole law or under none of it. If we admit that *some* of it has been accomplished, then we must say that *all* has been accomplished, for those are the words of the Lord.

Then Jesus goes on to further emphasize His point by making a statement about the least commandments. What did He say? Write the verse:

This is crucial. He said not even the least can be set aside until *all* are accomplished.

What does the word *break* mean in this context? Look up the word and see if you can tell contextually.

Not only could one not set aside the least command until all was accomplished, but even the force of the command could not be *lessened or freed from restraining*.

When, do you think, all was accomplished? Did Christ, indeed, come to accomplish/fulfill?

Write John 19:30 here:

5. Re-read Galatians 3. Find a passage that indicates that the Old Law was put into place until something happened. Write the verse here, highlighting the *something* that punctuated the fulfillment:

To what was the law bringing us, like a schoolmaster?

What was a *schoolmaster*? Look up this Greek word and read the root or primary definition carefully. Write it here:

6. Read Romans 10 and see if you find the fact that Christ was the termination of the law. Write that verse here:

Write the definition of the Greek word translated *end* here:

7. Finally, read Jeremiah 3. See if you can find a verse there that indicates the temporary nature of the old law. Write it here:

8. By now, we should all be able to make a list of at least ten reasons why the old law was insufficient and could not *make the comers thereunto perfect* (Hebrews 10:1), and that all of it has been done away. Make your list of ten here:

9. Now, place a New Testament passage beside each of the following things we abstain from today:

idolatry
profaning the name of the Lord
being disrespectful to and failing to honor parents
killing
adultery
stealing
bearing false witness, lying
covetousness

Practically Speaking:

Sing the Hymn “Man of Sorrows” as a Digging Deep group or ask your song leader if he will lead it for the church.

OR

Instead, use the song “How Deep the Father’s Love.”

Copy the phrases in these hymns that speak of the accomplishment.

Resources:

Camp, Franklin Old Truths in New Robes, Roberts and Son Publications, Birmingham, AL 1970, pp. 21,22

Chapter 12: Hear, O Israel!

If you've studied Digging Deep before, you know that my favorite thing to do in month 12 is something very practical, or at least something very applicable to our lives in the current year. So for this last month of *Digging Deep, 2021*, I'd like to heighten our awareness of the tremendous impact that the Law of Moses has wielded on Western Civilizations in our world, particularly on the U.S. government, since that's where the majority, though not nearly all of the diggers claim their citizenship.

1. Let's look first at a couple of obvious ways we see Moses the lawgiver, still visible (portrayed, at least) in our land; ways to which we may be oblivious and, sadly, ways that may be unavailable for viewing in the near future.

A relief of Moses the lawgiver hangs over the gallery doors of the U.S. House of Representatives chamber. Positioned there during the remodel of the chamber in 1949-1959, Moses is one of 23 recognized world leaders, but he is positioned at the center of the north wall and the other 22 around the circumference of the room are facing Him. He's the central figure.

On the east side of the U.S. Supreme Court building, the group of sculptures called "Justice is the Guardian of Liberty" features Moses holding what appears to be the Ten Commandments, along with Confucius and others. Both of these are prominent and powerful reminders strategically placed on buildings where our laws are made and interpreted.

Find other examples in online research of Biblical quotations and artwork displayed in stone, on monuments and in museums in our nation's capital. List some here. Sites such as apologeticspress.org, aclj.org and allabouthistory.org are great places to start. There are lots of these.

2. But what is more powerful than any artwork depicting Moses, is the profound influence that the Judeo-Christian system and especially the law of Moses had on the formation of our American legal system. The Old Testament and Judeo-Christian moral ethics are indisputably and intrinsically at the heart of both the English and American legal systems. The Ten Commandments, specifically, informed the U.S. Constitution. Even a cursory look at the *Declaration of Independence* shows, with certainty, its tie to the founders' general belief in the God of Moses and the Bible. After all, why is the truth self evident; that we are endowed with inalienable rights, if there is no ONE (authority) to endow? The existence of God and the verity of the Bible were taken for granted by the vast majority of the founders. Of course they were. Even the national motto, "In God we trust, adopted as late as 1950, and contested today by those who would claim it violates the Establishment Clause, belies the long-standing, but now eroding assumption that America is (or was) a God-honoring country, founded on Biblical principles of law. Research the angst against the national motto and write a paragraph about that opposition here:
3. See if you can think of lyrics in our songs of national patriotism that show a recognition of dependence on Almighty God. Write those lyrics here:

What is the Establishment Clause? Quote that here. Was that clause written and included in our constitution to (a) prevent Christianity from influencing government or (b) to keep the government from establishing an official state church? Try to research this question.

4. It is important to say next, that in spite of the large influence of the Bible in the founding years, the United States has never been the covenant people of God as were the Israelites of old. While I am certain that God has blessed America in amazing and even extreme ways, I'm also certain that, as a nation, we've never truly been a Christian nation. Those of us who have studied our Bibles understand that the mixture of Puritanism and Deism and Catholicism and the other isms of a religiously diverse conglomerate was not a representation of pure New Testament Christianity. While the vast majority of the fathers professed an allegiance to Christ, they were mostly not *in Christ* according to the terms of entrance given in clear New Testament passages. Thus, we have been a largely religious people, but we saw very little of the pure New Testament church in the early days of our nation prior to the Restoration movement. No large entity called people back to the Bible from a religious climate steeped in first, Catholicism and then, Calvinism. I believe it is a mistake to refer to the United States as having been a Christian nation. It was a religious nation and, when the Bible is believed and loved, it cannot but have a beneficent effect on the morality of society. Still, God cannot keep covenant with those who have not accepted His covenant terms as clearly prescribed by His Holy Spirit in His Word.

Thus, I believe it is extremely important that Christian mothers teach their children the disparity between a nation founded largely on Judeo-Christian principles, (which America was) and a Christian nation. In fact, the New Testament tells us that the spiritual Israel today is not a physical nation, but is the body of Christ. Find three passages that teach that the church is the covenant people or the Israel of today. List here:

5. Take the time this month to teach one or more children in your own home, in a class in your congregation or at your school co-op what the true Christian nation is today. Alternately, you may write a blog entry about this topic or any topic related to God and government and send to byhcontest@gmail.com for possible inclusion in the Bless Your Heart blog on The Colley House website (www.thecolleyhouse.org). I especially would love to hear what you are doing in your community to promote morality through government.
6. I sometimes hear preachers petitioning the people of America to “turn back to be a Christian nation once again,” quoting 2 Chronicles 7:14. Write that passage here:

I do not believe applying this passage to America today is appropriate, since our nation has never been in a spiritual condition to be called, as a state, by His name. Were I to posit that America has been a purely Christian nation, I'd have to place my implied endorsement on the notion that a mixture of denominationalism, Catholicism, Christianity, atheism and

agnosticism is a mixture that is of Christ. I believe all but one of those concepts is foreign to the teachings of the New Testament.

I do believe you and I, as Christian women, should apply this passage in our hearts and lives and families. We should constantly examine ourselves and tether every decision to the fact that we are humbly walking in His ways, seeking His face, and turning from every wicked way. When we do, He will forgive us, cleansing us constantly in the blood of His Son (I John 1:7). Write that passage here:

7. The gospel is the answer for the ills of our land. So, as His women, it behoves us to share it openly and unashamedly at every turn with every one who will listen. Write Romans 1:16 on a post-it note or calligraphy pad and put it in a conspicuous spot in your house.

Practically Speaking:

1. The following note ideas were born of the study of the Ten Commandments. Choose five of the 8 to write and send. Pray, as you drop them in the box, that they will find their way to hearts that can be encouraged to live closer to the God of the decalogue.
2. Write a note to someone who has lost sight of the priority of seeking God first. Encourage her/him to come back to a life based on Matthew 6:33.
3. Write a note to a godly elder who is consistently upholding the Holy name of the Lord. Commend Him for standing on the authority of the name of Jesus. Use a scripture.
4. Write a note to a mom who's doing a great job at bringing up respectful kids for Him. Bless her with support!
5. Write a note to a member of Congress encouraging her/him to support pro-life legislation.
6. Write a note to a single mom in your congregation who is/has been the innocent party in a divorce. Encourage her to stay close to God. Offer help and support.
7. Write a note to someone who is in prison. Send a teaching tract, if this is allowed.
8. Send a note to someone who has wronged you. Express kindness and heap coals of fire (Romans 12: 20-21).
9. Send a note to a someone who is struggling financially. Include a gift card to the sandwich shop or the coffee shop.

This last chapter is intentionally a bit shorter than the others, so that those of you who are current with the study can finish up by the last podcast. That podcast, Lord willing, will be live from our Digging Deep session at Polishing the Pulpit in Sevierville, TN, August, 2021.

May your study be blessed. May you always hear Him, O Israel!