

March-May Church-wide Small Group Sessions

The 10 Commandments

Session #6: Sex and Violence

OVERVIEW

Sunday Message Series: The 10 Commandments: Set Free to Live Free, Love God, Love Others

Resource: *The Ten Commandments: Living God's Way* by Mary Evans (CWR 2011)

Homework: Participants are asked to read the Scripture passages ahead of time in order to allow the Holy Spirit to inspire the understanding of their meaning.

Items needed for this session: Handouts of Session #6.

A way to view the videos (laptop, screen, etc.)

LOVE: ENGAGE GOD AND OTHERS (10 minutes)

WELCOME

Prayer: Begin with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to lead the session, to inspire the understanding of the Scripture read and to help you apply the session to your daily discipleship.

Say the week's memory verse:

"I will always obey your law, for ever and ever. I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts." -Psalm 119:43-44

Grow Group Series: 9 Sessions to this Grow Group cycle. Planned to finish by May 24.

ICE BREAKER.

Make a list of at least three things belonging to you that you would most hate to be taken from you. Share your list with your other group members by email, text or Facebook. Compare your list with your other participants. Do you see three top items that seem to be commonly held across the group?

SERVE: ENGAGE THE WIDER COMMUNITY

SERVICE PROJECT:

Your group is encouraged to find a creative way to still do a service project of some sort!

GROW: ENGAGE GOD'S WORD (50 minutes)

INTRODUCTION (By volunteer reader.)

Consider how you feel when you are deprived of things that belong to you. Think more broadly than just terms our possessions. Remembering this can create empathy with others who have suffered the losses involved with killing, adultery and theft.

This study looks at three different commandments, Commandments 6, 7 and 8. The aim of this study is to think of these commandments in terms of taking something from someone else that we do not have the right to take. Resist thinking about how wicked other people are who do these things and instead focus on how far we are responsible: not just for our own behavior, although that is important, of course, but also for what is tolerated within our society. Our response should not be just, "How dreadful!" but "What action can we take to change this?"

The discussion this week should take us into looking more closely at each of the three commandments covered. We will try to think in fairly large issues for society: some with the church and some with more personal aspects of life. Take seriously your own responsibility for each of these areas and think through the actions you can take to change things. It is very easy for us to avoid this responsibility by assuming the stance: It's all about politics and therefore nothing to do with me! The Ten Commandments themselves, placed in the context of how life is to be lived within a society, don't allow us to take that view. Wherever possible, be specific about suggestions and conclusions.

Very relevant here are insights from week #1 about the centrality of our relationship with God and the importance of recognizing exactly who He is. Try to bring your focus to what it is about God Himself that makes Him consider these things so important that He included them in this key summary of the Law. Jesus' attitude to woman caught in adultery is probably a key insight.

CONTEXT:

Video: "6. Do Not Murder" by Dennis Prager of Prager University
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0RENPaY043o> (5:23 minutes)

Discuss: How does understanding the translation as "murder" rather than "kill" help you?

Discuss: How do you personally separate moral and immoral killing of other people? Why?

OPENING OUR EYES

Read: Exodus 20:13-15, 21:12-27

Read: Genesis 9:1-6

Volunteer reader:

Every human society—throughout the world and throughout the ages—seems to agree that murder, adultery and theft are wrong. They may understand the term slightly differently (for example, there are a few cultures that do not have a concept of personal property), but even then it is still wrong for one village to take what belongs to another village. All these commandments relate to the taking away of something that belongs not to you but to someone else.

A. There is something special about life! Whether it is defined in terms of breath, or of consciousness, or in any other way, there is no doubt that life is precious. It is precious not just to the person who possesses it, but in and of itself. The Bible presents life as both given by God and belonging to God. This concept is expressed symbolically when Israel is commanded to not eat blood, which was seen as the bearer of life. All life is God's, but humanity is made in the image of God, and human life is particularly valuable (Genesis 9:5-6). To take away the life of another human being is hugely significant. It is to take something that belongs not to the person involved but to God. There are certain instances within the Old Testament, in war, or as part of the justice system, when the taking of life seems to have been sanctioned by God. Yet even there it is never to be taken lightly. Any society that treats human life as insignificant is a society going against God's purposes for humankind and probably on the verge of collapse.

B. The Bible is not unrealistic. It recognizes that marriage is not always ideal (Proverbs 21:9). However, marriage is always presented, like life, as being special. The relationship between husband and wife is pictured as closer and more significant than that between a child and their parents (Genesis 2:24). In ancient times adultery was almost always seen as a crime against a husband, but Jesus makes it clear that any man taking another woman commits adultery against his wife. To take

someone else's spouse and treat them as if they were your own it to destroy the marriage relationship, and God sees this as completely unacceptable. Marriage is the foundation of human family, and family life is the foundation of society. Any society that begins to treat marriage as insignificant is a society going against God's promises for humankind and probably on the verge of collapse.

C. Stealing is a little harder to define because property, ownership and rights can be understood in different ways. It is clear that taking what belongs to someone else is wrong: theft from someone's home, pocket or shop, or from one's employer all come into this category. But prophets like Amos and Micah make it clear that other things are also condemned: for example, denying justice to those without power; not paying fair wages; using unbalanced scales; or even for closing a loan when it would involve making a poor person destitute. Any society that does not properly identify and acknowledge the ownership rights of all its citizens is a society going against God's purposes for humankind and probably on the verge of collapse.

INTO THE BIBLE

Read: 2 Samuel 12:1-10

Read: Proverbs 30:7-9

Read: John 8:1-11

Discuss the following as time allows:

1. Most modern versions translate “you shall not kill” as “you shall not murder.” Do you agree that this is the best English rendering of the Hebrew word? Spend some time thinking about how this commandment may or may not relate to the death penalty, abortion, euthanasia or suicide.

2. Should any lack of concern for human life (for example drinking and driving, smoking when others are present, speeding or ignoring other safety regulations, or even risking our own life by over or under eating) be seen as breaking the Sixth Commandment?

3. “As long as no one finds out, then no one gets hurt” and “we love one another so it must be all right” are used to excuse adultery in many modern societies. Can these ever be seen as valid excuses?

4. Why is marriage so important? What difference do you really think it will make to our society if the proportion of people getting married steadily decreases and the proportion of those living together outside of marriage rapidly increases?

5. What does or could your church do to strengthen the appreciation of the value of marriage among young people?

6. Can you think of anything that happens in your business, local community, family or church that might be seen as stealing something that belongs to somebody else?

7. Modern international business practices, trade restrictions, and sometimes even aid payments which are given with strings attached, often favor big companies over small companies and

developed countries over developing countries. Does the Eighth Commandment have any relevance to this?

8. There's no doubt that murder, adultery and theft are wrong. But what should be the Christian attitude towards those who have been found to have offended? Will this be any different from the general attitude of society?

SEEING JESUS IN THE SCRIPTURES

Volunteer reader: Jesus apparently saw the keeping of these commandments as an important prerequisite for anybody who wants to “inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:18, Mark 10:19, Luke 18:20). Jesus’ attitude towards those who fail to keep them was sometimes more merciful than that of some Jewish leaders of His time, but He did not disagree with their conviction that these rules should be followed.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Volunteer reader: For most law-abiding citizens, it is very easy to see in these Commandments as only relevant to us when others break them! But perhaps we should all take a “health check” every now and then relating to our own attitudes and behaviors. How far does my own respect for human life stretch? Does it include those from other communities or in other countries? Do I respect those severely disabled as much as those without obvious disabilities? Does my respect for human life affect my behavior towards other people or is not actually murdering anybody else enough? How far does my respect for marriage stretch? Does it include supporting the marriages of others, making sure that nothing I do or say creates dissension between spouses, or is not sleeping with someone else's spouse enough? How far does my respect for what others own stretch? Does it involve concern for their rights and needs or is simply not taking their property enough?

Discuss: How will you apply what you learned in this lesson to your life this next week?

LOVE: ENGAGE GOD (5 minutes)

LOOKING AHEAD:

Invite someone new to come next week! I will invite:

Do we need to call/text/email and remind one another? I will remind:

Homework: Read Exodus 20:16-17. (Also, if you wish to read ahead, Proverbs 19:5, 21:28, 25:18, 26:18-19; Isaiah 29:19-21; Deut. 5:20-21; Micah 2:1-5; Ephesians 4:14-21; James 4:1-3.)

CLOSING PRAYER:

Pray the Lord’s Prayer in the version we prayed together last Sunday:

Ecumenical English Version, 1988, and offered for all English-speaking Christians:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.