6th-8th Small Group Time

**October 21st, 2020 @7:15-8 pm**

**Exploring the Commandments Part Three**

**Instructions**

*Be sure to start on a positive note. Welcome each learner by name. Let them know you're glad they're here! If anyone is absent, mention you'll be praying for that person together. Small Group Time is for give-and-take discussion. Your main job is to draw learners out and get them talking about the theme. Ask open-ended questions that will provoke responses. Once the conversation begins, intervene only to bring it back on track or to stimulate more talk.*

Bible Text: Luke 16:19-31; 1 Kings 3:16-28

Lesson Focus: God calls us to be honest and fair and to protect truth and property—always!

Big Question: Always be fair, honest, and truthful—am I supposed to be perfect?

Key Words: HONESTY, SHARE, PROTECT, INTEGRITY, TRUTH

Discussion Time

1. Help youth dive into the Key Words by asking for definitions and/or providing these definitions:

-HONESTY: being willing and able to name what you understand to be true about a situation.

-SHARE: letting others use or have what you consider yours. It can also mean everyone using something for the common good.

-PROTECT: to find a way to safeguard someone or something. The prefix *pro* is Latin for “in front of.”

-INTEGRITY: being willing to live by and do what you say you believe.

-TRUTH: often refers to facts but can refer to internal realities that cannot be proven.

2. How can you steal something from someone without physically taking something?

3. How are sharing and stealing connected?

4. How can you steal from someone by not telling the truth?

5. What does it mean to bear false witness? What does God want us to do?

*Bearing false witness is to tell lies about people or things that have happened. God wants us to bear “true” witness and to support each other by being wholly honest and truthful.*

6. What does it mean to twist our words, just a little bit?

7. Why is it important to be fair and honest in all things? *We honor God and other people when we do so.*

8. What kinds of concrete things can we do to help improve and protect the property and situation of our neighbor?

9. What would our society look like if the concept of integrity, an expectation of honesty, didn’t exist? Who could you trust? How would society function? How would we relate to each other? How would order be maintained?

10. Are there times when telling the truth would cause more harm? *(Two classic examples: citizens during World War II giving safe harbor to Jews when Nazi officers came to the door; a good friend or spouse asking you how something you don’t like looks on them.)* Can you think of other examples? What criteria are used to discern the appropriate course of action? How do you interpret the Eighth Commandment in times when “lying” is less harmful than truth-telling?

**Open the Bible**

1. Ask students to open their Bibles to Luke 16:19-31. Ask a volunteer to read this passage aloud. In this story the rich man lived well and with little regard for others. Talk about the conditions in which Lazarus lived. Did he try to steal the rich man’s food or possessions? *(Note that Lazarus longs to eat the scraps from the rich man’s table. The rich man does not even bother to give his waste to a starving man sitting at his gate.)* What are the consequences of the rich man’s style of living? Did he suffer after death because he was rich? *(Help students understand that his sin was in being wasteful and disrespectful of the needs of others.)* Look at verses 27-31. Who are the people today who are helping us hear and see the problems caused by stealing more than we need?

2. Ask students to offer words that describe Jesus. It is likely they will mention only positive attributes. Ask them to turn to John 2:13-22, and ask a volunteer to read. Who knew Jesus could get so angry? But what is he angry about? Is it just the misuse of the temple as a marketplace? *They were stealing a holy and sacred space. The temple had been turned into a business. In addition, the people who arrived were required to buy animals at unreasonable prices for the sacrifice they would make.* How is this stealing?

3. Have students turn to Luke 19:1-10, and have a volunteer read aloud. What does Zacchaeus do for a living? Why is the crowd upset that Jesus would choose to hang out with Zacchaeus? Why do they call him a sinner? *(Tell students that the tax collectors in Jesus’ day were corrupt and seen as supporters of the occupying Romans. They did the work of the Romans and kept some of the money collected for themselves.)* How is Zacchaeus affected by his encounter with Jesus? Is it unusual for Jesus to make this choice? (Look at Matthew 9:9-13.) *This is good news for us, because there is grace even for cheaters!*

4. Open Bibles to 1 Kings 3:16-28. Ask for four volunteers (narrator, King Solomon, and the two mothers) to put on a dramatic reading. *Solomon knows both women can’t be telling the truth, so he proposes a solution to discern the true mother. One of the key elements of this story is the lack of witnesses. Often there is not a solution that so clearly identifies the truth-teller. The consequence in this story is extreme—the potential physical death of the infant.* What other kinds of death can happen as the result of lying or gossip?

5. Have students turn to Ephesians 4:25—5:2. *Tell them this is from a letter Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus. It is written in a form called exhortation—giving earnest advice or encouragement. Before you begin to read, ask students to think about the kinds of problems the church at Ephesus may have been experiencing.* What does Paul’s advice boil down to? What part of this passage would not be true today? *(Trick question!) This is a good opportunity to remind students that although the Ten Commandments deal with specific issues, they all are about how we can live together in peace.*

**Open the Catechism**

1. Have students open the Catechism to the Seventh Commandment, and ask a volunteer to read it with its meaning. Like the Fifth Commandment, which forbids harming as well as actual murder, the Seventh Commandment’s broad definition of stealing includes cheating. Ask students to think of a time they or their families were cheated. Did it feel like something had been stolen from them? Encourage some sharing of experiences.

-Repeat Exodus 20:15 together several times. Make sure everyone understands that this shortest of all the Commandments is about things but is based on respect for persons. Discuss in student groups of two or three which of their neighbors—around the block and around the world—receive decent products and quality services and which don’t. Stimulate conversations by mentioning relevant global events or community crises and helping students identify examples of stealing or cheating that may contribute to the situations.

2. Ask students how they get to know people. Do they judge others based on what they say and do? Is that a good idea? Have they ever based their entire opinion of someone on one word or act? Do they think that anyone has ever made a sweeping judgment about them after hearing one of their words or observing one of their actions?

-Have students open the Catechism to the Eighth Commandment, and ask a volunteer to read it with its meaning. This Commandment, found in Exodus 20:16, along with the Fifth, Seventh, Ninth, and Tenth, names neighbors as the beneficiaries of our good behavior. Invite students to consider these questions: Do your neighbors know they can rely on your word? Can you be trusted to bear true, not false, witness? Are you someone who offers defense and the benefit of the doubt?