

Words of Life

Jesus and the
Promise of the Ten
Commandments
Today

Adam Hamilton

Bestselling Author of *Making Sense of the Bible*

LEADER GUIDE

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| To the Leader | 5 |
| 1. At the Center of It All | 11 |
| 2. The Idols We Keep | 17 |
| 3. “I Swear to God!” | 22 |
| 4. Rediscovering the Joy of Sabbath | 27 |
| 5. A Question of Honor | 33 |
| 6. The Tragedy of Violence, the Beauty of Mercy | 38 |
| 7. Faithfulness in an Age of Porn | 44 |
| 8. We’re All Thieves. Yes, Even You. | 49 |
| 9. Sticks, Stones, and the Power of Words | 54 |
| 10. Keeping Up with the Joneses | 59 |

ONE

AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL

Planning the Session

Session Goals

Through conversation, activities, and reflection, participants will:

- learn about the context in which God delivered the commandments to the Israelites;
- consider how the first commandment applies to their lives; and
- discover how Jesus interprets the first commandment in the New Testament.

Biblical Foundation

Exodus 20:1-3; Exodus 3:1-15; Ephesians 2:8-10a;
Matthew 22:37-38

Before the Session

- Set up a table in the room with nametags, markers, Bibles, extra copies of *Words of Life*, paper, and pencils or pens.
- Prepare your DVD player or computer to play this week's video segment.
- If possible, have a whiteboard or chart paper and markers or a chalkboard and chalk available for use during the session. Write this session's commandment so that it is visible for all participants:

I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You must have no other gods before me.

(Exodus 20:2-3)

Getting Started

Opening Activities

Greet participants as they arrive. Invite them to make a nametag and, if available, pick up either a Bible or a copy of *Words of Life*, or both if they did not bring either.

Introductions

Introduce yourself. You may want to share why you are excited about teaching this Bible study about the Ten Commandments.

If you sense that the participants in your group do not know one another well, allow time for them to introduce themselves and share something about their relationship with the church—for example, the name of a Sunday school class or small group to which they belong, a mission project they support, which worship service they attend, or if they are a visitor. Extend a special welcome to anyone who does not regularly attend your church and invite her or him to worship at your church if the person does not have a church home.

Housekeeping

- Share any necessary information about your meeting space and parking.
- Let participants know you will be faithful to the scheduled meeting time, and encourage everyone to arrive on time.
- Encourage participants to read the upcoming chapter(s) before the next session.

- You may want to invite participants to have a notebook, journal, or electronic tablet for use during this study. Explain that these can be used to record questions and insights they have as they read each chapter and to take notes during each session.
- Ask participants to respect a policy of confidentiality within the group.

Leading into the Study

Ask participants to share:

- What has been your experience with the Ten Commandments? Were you taught them in church or school or at home?
- Have you, like the author's wife, wondered if the commandments are still relevant to believers today?
- Why are you interested in doing this study?

Opening Prayer

Holy God, we thank you for the opportunity to gather today and study your word to us. Open our ears and our hearts so that we can learn more about you and your desire for us as we learn more about leading lives that honor you; in Jesus's name. Amen.

Learning Together

Video Viewing and Discussion

Play the DVD session (each is approximately 10 minutes long), then invite the group to discuss:

- What thoughts or feelings arise as you watched the sun rise over Mount Sinai? After watching this, what do you imagine about Moses's time on the mountain with God?

- How do the shots of Mount Sinai help you imagine the setting the ancient Israelites were living in? What can you infer about their lives?
- What did you learn from the author's conversation with Rabbi Nemitoff?
- Adam Hamilton asks us to consider the ways in which we are tempted to edge God out, or to put something else in God's place in our lives. How might you answer that question?

Study and Discussion

In Exodus 3, we read about God calling Moses to lead God's people, the Israelites, out of slavery and to become a new nation.

- Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to read aloud, Exodus 3:1-15.
- What is God's stated desire for God's people in verses 7-8? (*to rescue them out of slavery and to take them to a new land of promise and plenty*)
- Hamilton points out that the Israelites would have known the names of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of the gods of Egypt. Moses says to God, "If I now come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they are going to ask me, 'What's this God's name?' What am I supposed to say to them?" (v. 13). In verses 14-15, in what two important ways does God define himself to the Israelites? (*"I Am," the creator of all things / the God of the Israelites' ancestors, therefore the Lord is their God—the Lord has chosen them.*)
- How do you imagine the Israelites—who were, at that point, persecuted and enslaved—responded to this idea that they were favored and chosen, that there was a God who wanted them to be free and prosper?

- Throughout Scripture, we see that God often chooses the powerless and the poor. God does this because compassion, mercy, justice, and love define God's nature. How does this relate to what Paul says in the New Testament, in Ephesians 2:8-10a?

As the Book of Exodus continues, we see the Lord use Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery, and into the desert, where they await further instruction. Moses goes up Mount Sinai to meet with God and comes down with words from the Lord on two tablets (Exodus 32:15-16). Hamilton points out that most scholars believe the first tablet contained the first four commandments, which are about living in right relationship with God, and that the next six commandments, involving how we relate to our neighbor, were on the second tablet. These commandments were intended to set the guidelines for the new nation of Israel.

Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to read aloud, the first commandment, Exodus 20:2-3.

- Though we don't typically worship gods in the way the ancient Israelites did, when we broaden the definition of "other gods" to include those things or people we put our trust in, or define ourselves by, or put in a place of authority in our lives, it's easy to see there are many gods we can easily put before the Lord. What are some "gods" you see people worshipping today? (*wealth, status, fame, comfort, tradition, family, careers, and so forth—point out how even good things can become idols*)

Near the end of the first chapter, Hamilton writes:

When I began my study of the Ten Commandments, I could think of five or six of the commandments I wrestled with in one way or another, but the first commandment didn't come

to mind. The more I reflected on what constitutes a false god, however, the more I realized that this might be the commandment I am most tempted to break.

- After reading through this chapter, how do you identify with the author in this way?

As we move through this study, we will see how Jesus's words speak to each of the commandments, and how he turns every "thou shalt not" into a positive "do this instead."

- Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to read aloud, Jesus's words in Matthew 22:37-38. How does this command speak to every area of our lives?

Wrapping Up

The first commandment forces us to consider the question, "What is at the center of your life?"

- Take a few minutes to quietly reflect on what the Lord has to say to you about that question, and what the true answer might be. How is God asking you to respond to God today?

Closing Prayer

Holy and loving God, you know our hearts so well, and that we are so easily distracted in our devotion to you. Thank you for loving us and choosing us to be your children. Help us to recognize the false gods in our lives and to constantly turn our hearts back to you. Thank you for your faithfulness to us; in Jesus's name. Amen.

What if the Ten Commandments were not just a set of ancient rules, but a guide to experiencing the good life today?

Nearly everyone has heard of the Ten Commandments. These ten ancient “words” were given to us by a loving God who longed to set safe boundaries, create order out of chaos, help communities live peacefully, and protect us—often from ourselves.

In *Words of Life*, best-selling author Adam Hamilton brings modern eyes to the most important set of ethics in history. He considers the commandments in their historical context, considering the meaning of each commandment in Hebrew, unpacking how Jesus reinterpreted them, and showing how every “thou shalt not” was intended to point to a life-giving “thou shalt.” He also explores how the latest research in science and psychology illuminates these commandments, rightly understood, as a way of ordering one’s life beautifully in the present day. In a culture marked by workaholism, materialism, and social media–driven envy, God has given us a time-tested path that leads to gratitude, confidence, and peace.

This Leader Guide contains everything needed to guide a group through a five-, six-, or ten-week study of the Ten Commandments based on *Words of Life*.



ADAM HAMILTON is senior pastor of The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, one of the fastest growing, most highly visible churches in the country. *The Church Report* named Hamilton’s congregation the most influential mainline church in America, and he preached at the National Prayer Service as part of the presidential inauguration festivities in 2013. Hamilton is the best-selling and award-winning author of *The Call*, *Making Sense of the Bible*, *Love to Stay*, *The Journey*, *The Way*, *24 Hours That Changed the World*, *Revival*, *Not a Silent Night*, *Enough*, *When Christians Get It Wrong*, *Creed*, *Moses*, *Unafraid*, *Christianity and World Religions*, *Simon Peter*, *The Walk*, and *Incarnation*.

 **Abingdon Press**[™]
www.abingdonpress.com

Cover Design: Marc Whitaker / -MTWdesign.net

RELIGION / Holidays / Easter & Lent \$14.99
ISBN-13: 978-1-7910-1324-0
5 1 4 9 9

9 781791 013240