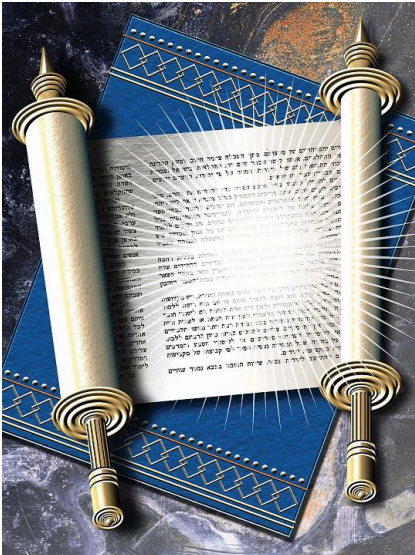


The 10 Commandments

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Before you start:

MEETING AIM: To look at the 10 commandments, and try to inspire young people that ‘rules from God’ might be worth looking at.

BACKGROUND PREPARATION: Make sure you’re aware of the background and ages of your young people. This guide would work best with a group of young people aged between 14 and 16, where some of them would say they are Christians, and some of them wouldn’t.

You’ll need some relevant music playing in the background, partly in case the session totally bombs, but also to provide some themed mood. Some of the songs have references to boundaries, rules, etc or contain the lyrics to kick off a discussion about such topics. You might like to use songs such as:

Every Breath You Take (Sting + various since)

Where Is The Love? (Black Eyed Peas)

My Name Is (Eminem – get a censored version, available at iTunes)

Rules video clip (2 mins)

Here you’ll need some preparation. Video is a great medium to bring a discussion to a point, and a film such as *Schindler’s List* could be used here to do that. There are a dozen scenes you could use to focus down on a society without rules. My favourite would be the scene where Schindler rides on horseback overlooking the scenes of destruction in the ghetto. The scene can be found 56 minutes and 16 seconds into the film. Caution may be advised with younger young people, so other scenes may need to be found. When using this film in general, this site is helpful:

<http://history1900s.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.historyinfilm.com%2Fschlist%2Fo>

Silly laws (10 mins)

Switch of emphasis here, highlighting some sensible laws and some silly ones. You might like to write cards with the silly laws on, and match them up to appropriate penalties, or do this on a flip chart, or into a PowerPoint – something visual! Mix some of these silly laws with some of the commandments, but changing the prefix:

- It is illegal to drive more than two thousand sheep down Hollywood Boulevard at one time.
- In Los Angeles, a man is legally entitled to beat his wife with a leather belt or strap, but the belt can't be wider than 2 inches, unless he has his wife's consent to beat her with a wider strap
- It is illegal to murder someone in England
- In Devon, Connecticut, it is unlawful to walk backwards after sunset
- It is illegal to say 'Oh, Boy' in Jonesboro, Georgia.
- It is foolish to eye up your mate's possessions and wish you had them
- It is against the law for a monster to enter the corporate limits of Urbana, Illinois
- No one may catch fish with his bare hands in Kansas
- Don't lie against your friend to get them into trouble

Further examples can be found at <http://www.main.com/~anns/other/humor/sillylaws.html>

KEY POINT: Though your young people might be brought up to believe that opinions are everything (no single truth, etc), this subtly emphasises the need to have boundaries at least.

Bizarre video clip (3 mins)

This clip shows an edited version of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments, from the 1950s film of the same name. Showing it might perhaps find a context for the session, or alternatively it might freak out your young people. In any case visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwIINWI3eI0>

Bible study – with plasticine (15-20 mins)

You need to be creative with this. Reading through the Bible passage and then saying things like ‘what do we learn about God from this’, isn’t the best approach, but it’s not a bad thing to try and get the passage into the young people’s minds and hearts. Linking the contemporary to the biblical is essential. So let’s go for the Ignatian model – where the idea is that you imagine yourself into the passage, but let’s use plasticine to do so.

Read Exodus 20: 1-21, and give the young people a copy for reference, then hand them the plasticine. Though it seems like something for children to do, being creative, and making things together, seems to work really well for some young people. Try to create the scene, or create the dynamic of being given rules for life, using loads of plasticine. Through this medium young people may well come to grips with the passage in a deeper sense!

The strongest rules... (15 mins)

This is an opportunity for young people to pretend to be the rule makers. Split into smaller groups. Using large sheets of lining paper, and assigning each group a marker-pen scribe, ask them to make some rules by which they’d like the nation to live. By this time this should work fairly naturally, since they have been ‘with’ the theme for some time now.

Read through each group’s list of rules, and discuss them together. Ask a spokesperson from each group to explain and defend their list. Of each list, ask how these rules might work in practice:

- Who might disobey them?
- What would happen if they were broken?
- How would they be enforced?

KEY POINT: Ultimately the Ten Commandments give us a strong moral code for living, much of which has been incorporated into the modern world. Without this code - without this ‘societal glue’ - things break down. Rules are given sometimes for the good of all of us, like in this case. God gave us the Ten Commandments as a framework for safety!

Closing meditation (5-10 mins)

You’ll need a separate room for this – nothing elaborate but a separate room, as bare as possible, with low-level lighting. Place a lit candle in the middle of the room, and have some gentle no-lyric music playing as you enter.

Encourage your young people to take off their shoes as they enter, to increase the sense of ‘holy ground’. Once in the room, the candle might increase that sense of stillness and calm.

Spend some time in silence if possible (the music will lessen the embarrassment factor), and then finish with a prayer to encourage your young people to think about the rules that govern them – to challenge and question what doesn’t seem right, but to always maintain a respect for authority.

NOTES FOR ADAPTING:

For younger groups... Cut the clip from *Schindlers List*, and instead go straight into the first activity.

For older groups... You may wish to scrap the plasticine and go for more ambitious junk modelling project. Can they sculpt an accurate representation of the passage and the scene from egg cartons and cereal boxes?

For unchurched young people... Read the passage from a translation such as the NIV, but use *The Message* on the handouts which you give to the young people. This may help them to get past some of the difficult language in the passage.

For churched young people... Spend more time on the passage. After you've finished the model-making exercise, talk with your young people about the Biblical context for these rules – God teaching his people how to live as humans after many years as captives in Egypt. Look at sections of the first 12 chapters of Exodus, to draw links between the ten plagues and the Ten Commandments.

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