

# Love of God and Neighbor

## Session Focus

This session on moral living explores the Great Commandment “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40) The session introduces the Ten Commandments and then focuses on the first three: loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind. It engages everyone in discovering anew how to love God by living the first three commandments in our lives, our homes, and our world.

## Learning Objectives

This session on loving God and neighbor guides learners of all ages to...

- understand the Ten Commandments as our covenant response to God and describe how we love God by keeping the first three commandments
- recognize the significance of the Ten Commandments as the way we live our response to God’s covenant and the commandments’ relevance for our faith lives today
- discover practical ways to live the first three commandments: loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind in our lives today

## Session Overview

**Part 1. (30 minutes)    Gathering & Opening Prayer Service**

**Part 2. (20 minutes)    All Ages Learning: My House of Values**

**Part 3. (75 minutes)    In Depth Learning Experience: Loving God with Our Whole Heart, Mind, and Soul**

- Option 1. Whole Group Format: All participants remain in the same room.
- Option 2. Age Groups Format : Participants go to separate rooms for parallel learning: families with children, adolescents, adults.

**Part 4. (15 minutes)    Sharing Learning Experiences**

**Part 5. (10 minutes)    Closing Prayer Service**

# Design Options for In-Depth Learning

## Option 1. Whole Group Format

This format guides the entire assembly through each of the learning experiences. You might choose this format if you have:

- a large physical space with good acoustics/sound system and furniture to comfortably accommodate the learners
- a competent large group facilitator/master of ceremonies able to provide clear directions and to manage the dynamics and energy of a large group
- a group of leaders who feel comfortable moving through the assembly offering assistance, or a large enough team of table leaders to have one leader work with each table group
- a learning topic that lends itself to everyone learning the same thing at the same time, but in different ways, in the same space

### **Facilitation Tips for this Format:**

Guide small groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups.
- Where needed, small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

## Option 2. Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic. You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

### **Facilitation Tips for This Format**

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.

- A facilitator must guide all the of the families through each learning experience, while small group leaders move from table to table assisting.

## Materials Needed

### Gathering

- Name tags
- Community building activities
- Opening Prayer Service Handout
- Bible

### All Ages Opening Learning Experience

- Handout #2

### In-Depth Learning Experience

- Handouts
- Families: Handouts #3-6 combined into one booklet
- Handout #7 printed on card stock paper, trimmed so that only the table tent remains
- Families: Two sheets of (lined) paper for each family; pen or writing marker (fine point), crayons, and pens
- Adolescents: newsprint, markers, masking tape

### Sharing Learning Reflections

- Several index/file cards for each table group

### Closing

- Closing Prayer Service

# Session Plan

## Part 1. Gathering and Opening Prayer (30 minutes)

### Preparation

Prepare a newsprint sheet or handout that lists the order of the activities or create a PowerPoint presentation that guides people through the session.

### Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the handouts participants will need for the session. You can also distribute handouts for the In-Depth Learning program at the beginning of the activity.
- Invite people to share a meal; depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal instead.

Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, using the words below or your own words.

This session on moral living explores the Great Commandment “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). The session introduces the Ten Commandments and then focuses on the first three commandments: loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind. It engages everyone in discovering anew how to love God by living the first three commandments in our lives, our homes, and our world.

## 1. Group Formation

Organize people into intergenerational small groups of approximately eight people for the All Ages Learning Experience. Ask all members of the same family to sit together in these intergenerational groups. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents, children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults. If members of the same family are intergenerational—children, teens, parents, and grandparents—keep them together in one group.

For the In Depth Learning Experience (Part 3) organize the participants into three types of table groups or break-out sessions: family clusters of two or more families, groups of adolescents, and groups of adults.

## 2. Opening Prayer Service

### Preparation

This opening prayer includes movie segments from *The Prince of Egypt* (available online). Connect the computer to external speakers. Set a large screen or a white wall for best viewing. Be sure to rehearse the presentation of the two sections from the movie.

Select readers for the Scripture readings.

## Gather

Lord God, long ago you called Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam, and the people of Israel into a special relationship with you. We pray now that we may recognize how you have called us into a special relationship with special responsibilities for living as God's people today. We ask this in the name of your loving Son, Jesus. Amen.

## Listen

### Scene 1: Call of Abraham (Genesis 17:1-7)

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.'

### Scene 2: Call of Moses (Exodus 3:3-15)

*The Prince of Egypt* Movie Segment: The Burning Bush

### Scene 3: Deliverance and the Covenant of Sinai

*The Prince of Egypt* Movie Segments: Crossing the Red Sea to Ten Commandments

### Conclude by reading Exodus 19:3-6.

Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.'

## Respond

We have a lifelong relationship with God. God loves us first and wants us to respond in love. God's great wish is that our relationship with him will last forever. God promised the people of Israel a special relationship—that he would be their God for all time. God told their leader, Moses, to tell the people, "If you hear my words and keep my covenant, you shall be my special people, dearer to me than all people. You shall be a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6).

For their part the people of Israel promised to be faithful to God. This included living the Law that God had written on the hearts and summed up in the Ten Commandments. Obeying the commandments of the Law was not a burden but rather a way for people to live out their relationship with God.

## Go Forth

Lord God, thank you for calling us into a special relationship with you. Open our ears that we may hear your words. Open our hearts that we may treasure your love for us. Give us the courage to live your Commandments every day as a sign of faithfulness to our living relationship with you. Amen.

## Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience: My House of Values (20 minutes)

The focus of the All Ages Learning Experience is to help the participants understand that the Ten Commandments provide the foundational values from which all Catholic moral teaching stems, and that these values are crucial for living in harmony with one another.

### Preparation

Create a PowerPoint presentation with the instructions for the house process in Handout #2. Or write them on one or more large sheets of newsprint.

### Materials Needed

- Handout #2 for each family with children, each adolescent, and each adult
- Pens

Give each family and individual participant Handout #2: My House of Values. Explain to the group that this activity will give them an opportunity to understand their own moral values and the influence these values have on their lives.

Guide the participants through the following process, giving them time to write their responses on the handout in the appropriate part of the house.

**Foundation of the House:** Write down the (most important) moral values that guide how you live your life as an individual or family. What are the things you will not budge on?

**Walls of the House:** What are the kinds of things (people and activities) you do to strengthen and support the moral values in your foundation?

**Windows of the House:** What are some of the specific ways you try to live your moral values?

At table groups invite each family and individual participant to share highlights from their “House of Values.” Ask them to share information from each of the three parts of the house: foundation, walls, and windows. Remind the group members to listen attentively to each other, to keep the focus on the person who is sharing (no distractions or speaking out of turn), and to be supportive and accepting of the person’s contribution.

After everyone has an opportunity to share, conduct a group discussion using the following questions:

- What are some of the moral values that are shared by many of the members of our group?
- What is easy about living your moral values? What is hard about living your moral values?
- What are some of the things people do to strengthen and support their moral values? Who or what helps you live your moral values?

Conclude the All Ages Learning Experience by introducing the Ten Commandments, using the words below or your own words. You may want to accompany your presentation with visuals using newsprint or a PowerPoint presentation.

“Given in Exodus 20:1-17 and in Deuteronomy 5:6-22, the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) can only be understood in the terms of the particular context that brought the “ten words” into being. In the Hebrew Scriptures that context is the Exodus event, in which God liberated a people from Egyptian slavery. After this great deliverance, God entered into a covenant with these people as a sign of His divine love and concern for them.

“The Commandments, therefore, are not a series of do’s and don’ts. They are covenant stipulations telling a liberated people how they can express their praise and thanks to the God who liberated them. The all-important prologue to the Commandments clearly places them in that context: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery’ (Exodus 20:2). The deliverance was God’s part in the covenant. It is followed by the covenant stipulations, which spell out for Israel the ways in which they are to respond to this wondrous, unmerited salvation. They are not the stern commands of a Lawgiver who demands obedience. They are the call of a Lover asking for a return of love.

“That is why Jesus treats the Commandments with great respect. He is careful to say that he has not come to abolish the law. At the same time, he seems to avoid saying that he came simply to obey it. The word he uses to express his attitude toward the law is “fulfill” (see Matthew 5:17). As the Sermon on the Mount makes clear, Jesus, without wavering in his reverence for the law, nonetheless reinterprets it. He does so to show, as the *Catechism* puts it, “the power of the Spirit at work in their letter” (see #2054). Jesus looks beyond external prescriptions to the inner spirit that motivates proper obedience to the law. He moves people to look beyond what the law *says* to what it *means*. Jesus transcends the law’s letter to discover its deepest intent. The most striking examples of this are the great antitheses in the Sermon the Mount: “You have heard...but I say to you...” For example: “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder...’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment” (Matthew 5:21a, 22a).

When asked by a scribe what the greatest of the commandments was, Jesus replied: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37b-40). What Jesus did was bring together a command from Deuteronomy 6:5 about love of God and a command from Leviticus 19:18 about love of neighbor to show that the Hebrew Scriptures themselves require, in the words of the *Catechism*, that ‘the Decalogue must be interpreted in light of this twofold yet single commandment of love, the fulfillment of the Law’ (#2055). As Saint Paul put it: ‘love is the fulfilling of the law’ (Romans 13:10b).” (William Shannon, *Exploring the Catechism*)

In this session we are going to explore how we live out our covenant relationship with God. As we begin it is important to remember that:

- All love comes from God.
- Love on our part is a response to and a participation in God’s love.
- We are called to love others as we love ourselves, that is, with our whole being.
- Love of others and love of God are inseparable.

## Part 3. In Depth Learning Experience: Loving God with Our Whole Heart, Mind, and Soul (75-80 minutes)

### Families with Children Learning Experiences

#### Preparation

Create a family workbook by combining Handouts #3-#6 into one booklet. Copy Handout #9 on card stock paper so that families can create a table tent reflection for their home table. The card stock paper will be easier to fold and stand by itself on the table. Trim the handout so that only the table tent remains.

Use Handout #8 Ten Commandment Coloring Page with younger children in family groups. They can color while the family is in a discussion activity.

Use Handout #7 Ten Commandment Flash Cards to create a take-home activity for children to learn the Ten Commandments. Print these on card stock paper, cut them out, and give each child a packet of cards to use in the session or to take home.

#### Materials Needed

- Handouts #3-#9
- Crayons or colored markers for little children
- Two sheets of (lined) paper for each family
- Pen or writing marker (fine point), and marking pens for the table tent activity

### 1. How Does God Intend Us to Live?

Ask parents and children to develop a list of their responsibilities to each other. On one sheet of paper, parents list their responsibilities to their children and to the family as a whole. On a second sheet of paper, children list their responsibilities to their parents and to the family as a whole. If possible, have the parents and children work separately from each other. Younger children will need the help of their parents.

After they complete their lists, ask parents to share their list and invite the children to add things their parents missed. Then ask children to share their list and invite the parents to add things their children missed.

Ask the family to discuss how well they did at identifying the responsibilities in their family life. Have them discuss which of the responsibilities are difficult to live and why.

Ask the families to imagine they are making rules for God's people. They have the responsibility to determine how people will keep God's covenant. Using Handout #3: Rules for Living Our Relationship with God, have the families create at least five or six commandments using the following two questions to guide their work:

- If you were in charge of making rules for God's people, what 10 rules would you make?
- What are one or two good things that would happen if people kept your rules?

## 2. The Ten Commandments

Review each of the Ten Commandments on Handout #4. Present each Commandment and the description of the commandment aloud to the group, or ask the parents and older children at each table group to take turns reading the commandments aloud to each other.

After presenting the Ten Commandments, ask the families (alone or with the families at their table) to compare their rules with God's rules (The Ten Commandments).

- Where do they see the similarities?
- What would they add to their list from God's list?

Conclude the review of the Ten Commandments by having each family or table group of families identify one or two good things that would happen in our lives, our families, and in our world if people kept each of the Ten Commandments.

## 3. The First Three Commandments

Ask parents to review the first three Commandments with their children by reading and discussing Handout #5: Loving God with Our Whole Heart, Mind, and Soul. After reviewing each Commandment, ask the families to discuss the reflection questions and identify ways that they practice the Commandment and ways they don't practice it.

## 4. Making Time for God

This activity will analyze a family's use of time and how God is a part of their family's life.

Introduce the activity with the following Scripture quote:

"Your heart will always be where your treasure is" (Luke 12:34).

How we use our time says a lot about what is really important in life. Is God #1 in our family life? Is loving God with our whole heart, soul, and mind at the center of our family's life?

Think about how you or your family currently spends time on a *typical week*. Identify the number of hours your family spends on typical daily activities, such as school, work, homework (adults and children), activities and sports, family meals, family activities, entertainment/TV, online and computer time, listening to music time, sleep, etc. First determine your typical activities. Second, figure out how much time you spend on these activities. Finally, use your "Family Time Chart" to draw a picture of how your family uses time for each activity. Draw a pie chart, dividing up the chart based on the amount of time you allocate to each activity.

Allow time for families to complete the exercise, then continue:

After your family has completed the "Family Time Chart" try to determine the "God activities" you engage in each week.

- How does your family live its responsibilities to God each week? What do you do?
- How much time does your family give to God each week?
- What can you do to make God a more important part of your family's life?

## 5. Family Table Tent—Living the First Three Commandments

Conclude the session with a creative activity. Ask each family to create a “Family Table Tent: Living the First Three Commandments” using Handout #9.

Ask families to answer the focusing question for each commandment. Remind them that they should decide what they will *actually do* to live the commandments at home. They can decorate the table tent with symbols or images for each commandment. Ask them to place the table tent on their kitchen table as a reminder of what they will be doing to live God's commandments.

## Adolescent Learning Experiences

### Materials Needed

- Handouts #10, #11, #12
- Newsprint, markers, masking tape

### 1. Relationships and Responsibility

Ask the teens to identify all of the people they have a relationship with: parents, friends, teachers, coaches, boyfriend-girlfriend, and so forth. Using Handout #10: Relationships Mean Responsibilities, ask each person to identify important responsibilities that go with each relationship.

Then share the following:

Put yourself in God's place for a moment. You have rescued the Israelites from slavery and you want to form them into a holy people, the chosen people. You have formed a covenant with them. A covenant is like a contract between two persons, but it is more serious and heartfelt than a legal contract. It is a sacred promise or agreement between God and humans involving mutual commitments. What will you say to them? What rules for living as God's people will you give them?

Have the entire table group work together to identify the most important responsibilities human beings have toward God. Direct them to write these responsibilities on a sheet of newsprint for the whole group to see.

### 2. The Ten Commandments Today

Review each of the Ten Commandments on Handout #11. Present each commandment and the description of the commandment to the whole group.

After presenting the Ten Commandments, ask the teens to compare their list of responsibilities toward God (from the earlier activity) with The Ten Commandments.

- Where do they see the similarities?
- What would they add to their list from God’s list?

Engage the young people at table groups in creating a modern-day ten commandments. Have them “update” the Ten Commandments using positive statements written in modern language. For example:

Commandment 8: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Contemporary Statement: We are to be honest and truthful in all of our relationships and respect the rights of other people.

Have the teens use Handout #11 as a guide to the content of each commandment. Divide the group into pairs and assign each pair commandments to update. Give them time to work on their assignment and then ask each pair to report their results to the whole group. Ask them to explain why they decided upon the new language for the commandment. As each pair presents their commandments, write them on newsprint with a heading such as “A Contemporary Ten Commandments.” Later, post the newsprint on the wall for the entire gathering to read.

Lead a table group discussion focusing on the application of the Ten Commandments to our world today. This discussion is designed to help the teens see the relevance of the Ten Commandments for our world and for their lives. Use Handout #11 and the contemporary ten commandments developed by the teens to guide the discussion.

Ask the young people to imagine a world in which people and nations were living by the Ten Commandments.

Discuss the following questions:

- What are one or two good things that would happen in our lives and in our world if people kept each of the Ten Commandments?
- What if people and nations actually lived the Ten Commandments? What problems in our world would disappear?

### 3. Loving God—The First Three Commandments in My Life

Focus the group’s attention on the first three commandments by guiding them through Handout #12: Loving God with Our Whole Heart, Mind, and Soul—The First Three Commandments. You can conduct this activity in one of two ways. You can guide the entire group through the three commandments with table discussions (see below). Or you can divide the whole group into three work groups and assign one commandment to each group. Ask each group to complete the questions under the “Imagine” section, review the suggestions for living the commandment, and develop their own suggestions for living the commandment. Each group will then report back to the whole group and teach each other. Facilitate the presentations and discussion.

Facilitate the following process for each of the three commandments.

### **Who's First in Your Life?**

- Imagine: Discuss the three questions on Handout #12 as a group.
- Make God First in Our Lives: Review the suggestions with the group.
- How Can You Live the First Commandment? As a group brainstorm practical, realistic ways that young people can live the first commandment. Each person can write suggestions on their worksheet.

### **How Do We Speak about God?**

- Imagine: Discuss the two questions on the handout as a group.
- Show Respect for God's Name: Review the suggestions with the group.
- How Can You Live the Second Commandment? As a group brainstorm practical, realistic ways that young people can live the second commandment. Each person can write suggestions on their worksheet.

### **How Do We Keep Sunday Holy?**

- Imagine: Discuss the two questions on the handout as a group.
- Keep Holy the Lord's Day: Review the suggestions with the group.
- How Can You Live the Third Commandment? As a group brainstorm practical, realistic ways that young people can live the third commandment. Each person can write suggestions on their worksheet.

## **Adult Learning Experiences**

### **Preparation**

Write the essential instructions on newsprint or create a PowerPoint presentation with the instructions.

### **Materials Needed**

- Handout #13

The adult session has been created as a self-directed small group activity. Facilitators can guide the adults through the learning activities as outlined on Handout #13.

Organize the participants into small groups of 6-8 people.

### **1. Loving God throughout Our Life**

Ask participants to complete the Personal Reflection section of Handout #13. Ask them to complete all the statements that relate to their life.

Ask the participants to share with their group how the meaning of the Ten Commandments and the way they live the commandments have changed from childhood to the present day. Remind the groups to give each person time to share his or her reflections without interruptions or discussion.

## 2. Love God and Neighbor—Interactive Essay

This is an interactive essay with reflection questions to help the participants reflect on the meaning of Ten Commandments today, and in particular on the first three commandments. The essay is divided into two sections. For each section ask the participants to take turns reading the text aloud in the group or allow time for each person to read the section, then reflect quietly on the questions, and then share their reflections with your group.

### The Law of Love

Read aloud or have someone in the small groups read the following Scripture passage from the Gospel of Matthew.

Then someone came to him and said, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’ And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The young man said to him, ‘I have kept all these; what do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions (Matthew 19:16-22).

Have participants read or present The Rich Young Man and The Law and Love in Handout #13.

Ask the participants to reflect on the following questions and then discuss them with their group.

- Is Catholic morality governed by “observance of the law” or by the “law of love”—love God and your neighbor as yourself? What do you think?
- What do you think about the insight, “Jesus tells us we are to love God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Love implies proper relationships. God’s law spells out what those relationships should look like. One who loves embraces them willingly. . .”
- “One who lives by love is not content with the minimum or with living on the fringe.” “It is easy to speak of the law of love. But is it possible to actually live it? Is it possible to go beyond the minimum?” What do you believe?
- The author summarizes this section by writing: “The law of love is the key to unlocking the mystery of law, freedom, and perfection. Christ has given us a new commandment, that we love one another (John 13:34). It is an ‘inner law’ for only in the Spirit who has been given to us can we love as Christ commands. Dwelling within us, He sets us free from sin and death; in Him the just demands of the law are fulfilled (cf. Rom. 8:2, 4). In Him the rich young man’s dilemma is solved, and we need not go away sad. ‘In Christ’ the Holy Spirit is given to us as gift. Thus ‘in Christ’ are we saved.”
  - What does this mean to you?
  - What are the implications for our understanding of Catholic morality?
  - What is the role of the law in Catholic morality?
  - What difference do the author’s insights make in the way you live your life?

## The First Three Commandments

Have participants read or present The First Table of the Law and From Theory to Practice in Handout #13.

Guide the participants in reflecting on their practice of the first three commandments using the activity in Handout #13.

### 3. Closing Reflection: How Can the Commandments Speak to Today's Catholics

Read aloud or have someone in the small groups read the following Scripture passage from the Gospel of Mark and present the commentary below.

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, 'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' Then the scribe said to him, 'You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that "he is one, and besides him there is no other"; and "to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength", and "to love one's neighbor as oneself",—this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.' When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' After that no one dared to ask him any question (Mark 12:28-34).

Reflecting on the passage from the Gospel of Mark, one gets a glimpse into Jewish piety at its finest. To this scribe, the first, second, and third commandments were not mere laws written on stone. They were inscribed in his heart, and out of them came a piety and worldview which must have been the underlying motive for everything he did in his day-to-day life, whether praying in the synagogue, doing business with his neighbor, arranging his priorities, or questioning an itinerant preacher.

The same attitude should govern our approach to the first tablet of the Ten Commandments. If we examine ourselves in light of our "underlying attitude," perhaps we might have more to think about when we examine our conscience in this area of God's law.

Give the participants several minutes for personal reflection to integrate their learning from this session using the following questions:

- How are the first three commandments inscribed on your heart and the underlying motive for everything you do each day?
- What specific actions will you take to live the first three commandments more fully in your life?

Conclude by asking the participants to share insights from the two reflection questions with their group. Remind the groups to give each person time to share his or her reflections without interruptions or discussion.

## Part 4. Sharing Learning Reflections (15 minutes)

### Preparation

Give each group several index cards to write their prayer petitions.

The whole group sharing experience provides an opportunity for each age group to share something they have learned with the entire group. Ask the participants to rejoin their intergenerational groups from the All Ages Learning Experience.

In light of the presentation on the Ten Commandments, invite the families and individual participants to re-examine "My House of Values." Guide them in reviewing the moral values they identified and using the Ten Commandments, especially the first three, to affirm values they hold. Tell them to put a plus sign (+) in front of the values that were affirmed.

Then ask them to identify any moral values they need to strengthen or change because of their learning. Ask them to put an (X) in front of values that need to be strengthened and a parenthesis ( ) around values in need of change.

Lastly ask them to identify any moral values they would add to their house. Ask them to write these on the roof of the house.

In the table groups from the All Ages Experience, invite each family or individual participant to share highlights from his or her reflection on *My House of Values*.

- Where was I affirmed? I feel good about...
- What do I need to strengthen or change? I need to grow in... I need to change...
- What did I add? I want (value) in my life.

Before concluding, ask each table group to write several prayers of petition, asking for God's help in living the Commandments. Write one prayer petition per file card. Collect the file cards before closing prayer.

## Part 5. Closing Prayer Service: Building Our Lives on a Solid Foundation (10 minutes)

### Preparation

Collect the prayer petitions from each table.

Select several people who will read the prayer petitions.

### Gather

Let us conclude this session with the words of Jesus from the end of the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus reminds us that it is wise person who hears the Word of God and acts on it. It is like a person who builds a house on a solid foundation so it can withstand the storms of nature.

**Listen**

A reading from Matthew 6:24-27:

'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!'

**Respond**

Introduce the prayer petitions by saying:

Let us pray now for the strength to build our house, our moral life, on the solid foundation of God's commandments.

Our response to each prayer petition is: Lord God, help us live the Commandments.

Have each reader take turns reading one prayer petition.

**Go Forth**