BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE®

SENIOR ADULTS
Leader Guide

FALL 2020 | CSB

STUDY 1:
After God's Own Heart: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments

STUDY 2:
All In: A Life of Commitment

LifeWay | Adults

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How to Use *Bible Studies for Life* 6

Bible Studies for Life's Discipleship Plan 12

After God's Own Heart: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments

Suggested for the week of			
		Introduction	14
September 6	Session 1	**Place God First**	16
	Article	The Attraction of Idolatry	26
September 13	Session 2	**Honor God**	30
September 20	Session 3	**Honor Parents**	40
September 27	Session 4	**Honor Life**	50
October 4	Session 5	**Honor Marriage**	60
October 11	Session 6	**Honor All Relationships**	70
	Article	Reclaiming Group Members	80
	Article	Three Ways to Take the Temperature of Your Group	82
	Article	Discipleship Plan	84

All In: A Life of Commitment

		Introduction	86
October 18	Session 1	**Christ's Commitment to Us**	88
October 25	Session 2	**Our Commitment to Christ**	98
	Article	Jesus' Teaching on the Ten Commandments	108
November 1	Session 3	**Committed to His Word**	112
November 8	Session 4	**Committed to His Church**	122
November 15	Session 5	**Committed to Pray**	132
November 22	Session 6	**Committed to His Worship**	142
November 29	Session 7	**Committed to His Mission**	152
	Coming Next Quarter		162

DON'T MISS THIS!

Social Media

Connect with a community of *Bible Studies for Life* users. Post responses to questions, share teaching ideas, and link to great blog content. **Facebook.com/BibleStudiesforLife**

Get instant updates about new articles, giveaways, and more. **@BibleMeetsLife**

EXTRA!

Every week, you'll find additional discussion questions and creative teaching ideas to help you tailor each session to the needs of your group. You'll also find links to magazine articles and the *Family Connection* page for parents. **www.BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra**

Family Connection

Family Connection helps parents connect with their students and kids by talking about what they're learning in their different Bible study groups. *Family Connection* makes it easy for parents to engage their children in spiritual conversation. *Family Connection* is available at **BibleStudiesforLife.com/FamilyConnection.**

Digital Download

Both the Leader Guide and the Personal Study Guide are available as PDFs in a digital download. Go to **www.BibleStudiesforLife.com.**

Podcast

Get free weekly insights for every session of *Bible Studies for Life: Adults* with our podcast. Each 20-minute episode will help you get the most out of your upcoming study. Listen at the gym, on the drive home, or wherever is best for you. Just search *Bible Studies for Life Adults* on your favorite podcast app to start listening today.

Bible Studies for Life:
Senior Adults Leader Guide

Volume 8, Number 1
Fall 2020

Lynn H. Pryor
Team Leader

Chris Johnson
Content Editor

Ken Braddy
Director of Sunday School

Brandon Hiltibidal
Director, Groups Ministry

Send questions/comments to: Content Editor
by email to chris.johnson@lifeway.com
or mail to: Content Editor
Bible Studies for Life: Senior Adults Leader Guide
One LifeWay Plaza
Nashville, TN 37234

Or make comments on the web at www.lifeway.com.

Printed in the United States of America.

Bible Studies for Life: Senior Adults Leader Guide (ISSN: 2330-9822; Item 005075045) is published quarterly by LifeWay, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234, Ben Mandrell, President. © 2020 LifeWay.

This Leader Guide is designed for leaders of senior adults ages 70 and up. We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter, and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

For ordering or inquiries, visit www.lifeway.com, call (800) 458-2772, or write LifeWay Customer Service, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234. For subscriptions or subscription address changes, e-mail subscribe@lifeway.com, fax (615) 251-5818, or write to the above address. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, e-mail orderentry@lifeway.com, fax (615) 251-5933, or write to the above address.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS—All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Christian Standard Bible® (CSB®), Copyright 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

WELCOME

Fall. It's my favorite time of the year. Football returns. The afternoons are warm. The nights are cool and crisp. God gives us explosions of color as the leaves change. And don't forget Thanksgiving, one of my favorite holidays. I love the emphasis on family and friends.

And there's my other reason for loving fall—a new season of Bible study. In most churches, attendance rises as people return from summer vacations and settle back into more normal routines. I love it when I look up and see all the members of my Bible study group together again, ready to study God's Word.

The *Bible Studies for Life* team has created two excellent studies for us. I say "us" because I teach a *Bible Studies for Life* group at my church. Tony Evans wrote the first of our two fall studies. *After God's Own Heart* will give us a fresh look at the Ten Commandments. Just think how much better our lives and our society would be if we followed these commands daily. A second study by Matt Carter, *All In,* will challenge each of us to raise our level of commitment to Christ.

It's going to be a great fall! I'm glad we're going to experience these new studies together.

Ken Braddy

Director of Sunday School

@kenbraddy | www.kenbraddy.com

HOW TO USE BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Invite the Holy Spirit's Guidance

Because God is the guide for your study, invite Him to show you how to be the best facilitator for your group. Read the Bible passage several times with the Holy Spirit showing you its meaning and application.

Personal Study Guide

Then read the Personal Study Guide. Its content provides the foundation and direction for the Bible discussion and study by your group.

Leader Guide

Follow the simple directives in the group plan. This plan will guide you in engaging your group in discussion around the Bible passage. Read the commentary to help you understand the passage. Share insights from the commentary as needed during the group discussion.

Leader Pack

The optional Leader Pack is designed to enhance the group experience, especially for visual learners. Pull in the Leader Pack items as referenced in the group plan.

The Leader Pack also includes access to digital files including:

- JPEG files of the two main study images that you can use with any presentation software (ie., PowerPoint). (Promote the study by placing these images into an announcement slideshow or display the images during the sessions to reinforce the study topic.)
- PDF file of each pack item (Create multiple posters, during your session display the image on a screen using any presentation software, or post these images on social media to promote the study.)
- Sample Twitter® and email messages to post prior to your Bible study time to raise awareness and promote the session topic
- An electronic version of the group plans that you can customize and print
- Promotional videos to introduce both of the studies in this quarter
- *Biblical Illustrator* articles that allow you to go deeper in your study

Additional Ideas

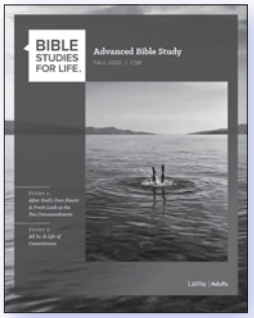
Additional discussion questions and teaching suggestions for leaders are available online at www.BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra.

Prepare Your Group Members

Encourage your group members to read the ***Personal Study Guide*** prior to the group meeting. (Some group members will prefer to read it after the meeting as a way to follow up and reflect.)

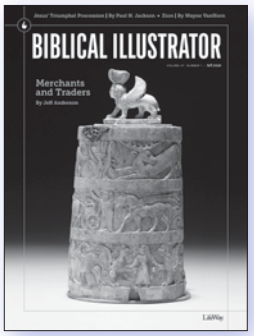
Encourage them to join the conversation with others on our Facebook page (Facebook.com/BibleStudiesforLife); our blog (BibleStudiesforLife.com); or on Twitter (@BibleMeetsLife).

For Those Who Want to Go Deeper



The ***Advanced Bible Study*** is written for group members who desire more extensive commentary. It includes exposition of each session's Scripture passage, an examination of key words, an introduction to the setting of the passage and biblical life and times, questions to guide the study, and interactive responses to help readers apply God's truths to their lives today.

The ***Herschel Hobbs Commentary*** is designed specifically for leaders and provides a comprehensive exposition of each session's Scripture passage. Specific attention is called to items in the biblical text that readers would miss without a commentary. This commentary is based on the King James Version but interacts with all major English translations.



Each quarter, ***Biblical Illustrator*** offers in-depth background information on Bible customs, history, culture, archaeology, and word studies through vivid photography, engaging maps and graphics, and lesson-targeted articles. You can subscribe to *Biblical Illustrator* by going to lifeway.com/biblical illustrator or by calling 1-800-458-2772. Forty additional articles (in PDF form) that support this quarter's Bible studies are available at lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator.

Prayer Requests

Prayer Requests

Prayer Requests

Prayer Requests

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

The Pathway of Discipleship

Growing in Christ is a journey—a lifelong journey—but what does that look like? LifeWay's research reveals eight markers consistently present in the lives of believers who are growing spiritually. Each year, Bible Studies for Life engages all eight of these areas. Following this intentional plan for discipleship ensures progress on the pathway to becoming more like Christ.

Visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com for a fuller picture of this discipleship plan through 2022.

8 MARKERS	Fall 2020	Winter 2020-21	Spring 2021	Summer 2021
Build Relationships	After God's Own Heart: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments			
Seek God	All In: A Life of Commitment			
Obey God and Deny Self		When Emotions Rise		
Engage with Scripture		Spiritual Disciplines: Becoming More Like Jesus		
Exercise Faith			The Essentials of Christianity	
Share Christ			How to Share Christ	
Live Unashamed				Walking in Confidence
Serve God and Others				Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts

After God's Own Heart: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments

How this study supports the Discipleship Plan:

Build Relationships. We have no greater way to build good relationships than what we find in the Ten Commandments God provided. In the briefest and clearest of statements, God has revealed the way to relate to Him and others.

Session 1 **Place God First** // Exodus 20:1-6; Psalm 16:1-4a,9-11

Session 2 **Honor God** // Exodus 20:7-11; Psalm 145:1-7

Session 3 **Honor Parents** // Exodus 20:12; 2 Samuel 15:7-14

Session 4 **Honor Life** // Exodus 20:13; 1 Samuel 26:7-11,22-25

Session 5 **Honor Marriage** // Exodus 20:14; 2 Samuel 11:1-5

Session 6 **Honor All Relationships** // Exodus 20:15-17; Psalm 37:1-6

All In: A Life of Commitment

How this study supports the Discipleship Plan:

Seek God. Seeking God is not something we do casually or only when we feel like it. A full commitment to Christ means we intentionally and continually seek after God and the things of God. As we deepen our walk and commitment to Christ, it only deepens our desire to seek Him, know Him, and please Him.

Session 1 **Christ's Commitment to Us** // Romans 5:6-12,18-21

Session 2 **Our Commitment to Christ** // Mark 10:13-22

Session 3 **Committed to His Word** // Psalm 119:1-11

Session 4 **Committed to His Church** // Romans 12:3-16

Session 5 **Committed to Pray** // Colossians 1:3-12

Session 6 **Committed to His Worship** // Psalm 99:1-9

Session 7 **Committed to His Mission** // Romans 10:9-17

Introduction

After God's Own Heart: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments

Ethics and morals have become skewed in our world today. People want to live life on their own terms, but God has given us a succinct and clear path to follow through the Ten Commandments. Unfortunately, too many people see these Commandments as a negative list of don'ts, but obeying these Commandments leads to a rich and full life.

Jesus distilled the Ten Commandments down to love for God and others (Matt. 22:37-40). When we live lives of Christ-centered love, we will be living out the heart of the Ten Commandments.

We're going to take a fresh look at the Ten Commandments. We're not going to focus so much on the things we're not to do, but we will see what obedience frees us to do and be in Christ. Along the way, we're going to look at David, a man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14), as his life serves as the backdrop for a greater understanding of just how to live a life pleasing to God.

Author:
Tony Evans is senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship and president of The Urban Alternative. He's been preaching for over fifty years and can be heard on the radio broadcast, The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans. www.tonyevans.org.

Commentary Writer:
Greg Miller wrote the Bible commentary for this study. Greg is involved at Celebration Church in Hoschton, Georgia. He is a former editor at LifeWay, and a former pastor and church planter. He and Nancy, his wife, have three grown children and two granddaughters.

Get into the Study

5 MINUTES

GUIDE: Invite group members to turn to **page 3** of the **Personal Study Guide (PSG)** and review the titles of the six sessions of this study titled **After God's Own Heart: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments.**

LEADER PACK: Display **Item 1: After God's Own Heart** poster and point out the session titles.

After God's Own Heart: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments

- **PLACE GOD FIRST**
  Exodus 20:1-6; Psalm 16:1-4a,9-11
- **HONOR GOD**
  Exodus 20:7-11; Psalm 145:1-7
- **HONOR PARENTS**
  Exodus 20:12; 2 Samuel 15:7-14
- **HONOR LIFE**
  Exodus 20:13; 1 Samuel 26:7-11,22-25
- **HONOR MARRIAGE**
  Exodus 20:14; 2 Samuel 11:1-5
- **HONOR ALL RELATIONSHIPS**
  Exodus 20:15-17; Psalm 37:1-6

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture on **PSG page 14** and ask **Question 1: When has a simple solution taken you by surprise?**

SESSION 1

Place God First

THE POINT

God is to have first place in every aspect of life.

LIFE CONNECTION

Anything or anyone might be your god. For some people, their god is money, their career, pleasure, sports, or a special possession. Unfortunately, these gods—those things we place above all else—are rampant in our society. The Bible calls this idolatry, giving to someone or something else the devotion and worship God alone deserves. God calls us to devote ourselves to Him because He alone is God. In Him alone is found true life, both in this world and in the world to come.

THE PASSAGES

Exodus 20:1-6; Psalm 16:1-4a,9-11

THE SETTING

After God delivered them from Egypt, God led the Israelites to Mount Sinai. There God met with Israelites, revealing Himself and instructing them on the stipulations of the covenant He was making with them. Foremost among these was the command to give Him first place in their lives. Centuries later, King David wrote not only to declare his trust in God but also to emphasize why God deserves the place of priority in our lives.

Exodus 20:1-6

1 Then God spoke all these words:
2 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.
3 Do not have other gods besides me.
4 Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth.
5 Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' iniquity, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me,
6 but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands.

1 ▶ ***Verse 1.*** Every law is set forth by an authority. However, because most of these authorities are human, there is no guarantee that such laws will be wise or just. Furthermore, such laws usually are not applicable at every time for every person. But one authority is different: **God.** He alone is perfect and holy, free from all sin. As the Creator of all things, He is all-knowing and timeless. After delivering the Israelites from slavery to the Egyptians, God led them to Mount Sinai where He gave the Israelites a set of decrees, chiefly and most succinctly expressed in the Ten Commandments. The principles behind these decrees are applicable to all people at all times. These were "the words of the covenant" (Ex. 34:28) God made with the Israelites. (A covenant is an agreement between two parties through which they pledge allegiance to one another. The covenant between God and the Israelites established God's consistent and ongoing relationship with the Israelites.) However, these **words** also express God's moral laws which define how all people of every age should approach God, life, and relationships. ◀

While God was not directly visible to the people, His awe-inspiring presence on Mount Sinai was unmistakable. It included thunder and lightning, smoke and fire, and a violent shaking of the mountain, which caused the people to shudder and tremble (19:16-19; 20:18). Against this backdrop God **spoke** the words recorded in Exodus 20:2-17, the "Ten Commandments" (34:28).

GUIDE: Refer group members to **"The Bible Meets Life" (PSG, p. 15)** to the story about the man who told his doctor he hurt in every part of his body that he touched.

SAY: Even though it may seem like everything in life is a mess, the solution comes down to three words: *Put God first.* This one action affects everything.

GUIDE: Introduce **The Point** on **PSG page 15: God is to have first place in every aspect of life.**

RECAP: Refer to **"Life Connection"** on page 16 for an alternate introduction to the session.

PRAY: Begin the Bible study with prayer. Ask God to open our eyes to fresh insight as we study the Ten Commandments.

Study the Bible
Exodus 20:1-6

15 MINUTES

SUMMARIZE: Before reading the verses, refer to **"The Setting"** on page 16 to establish the context of the biblical passage.

READ: Invite a group member to read Exodus 20:1-6.

THE POINT God is to have first place in every aspect of life.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bible Commentary** 1 on page 17 to explain about the covenant relationship between God and the Israelites.

- ***Covenant****—an agreement between two parties through which they pledge allegiance to one another.*
- *The covenant between God and the Israelites established God's ongoing and consistent relationship with the Israelites.*
- *These words also express God's moral laws which define how all people of every age should approach God, life, and relationships.*

SAY: Before God pronounced His covenant stipulations and moral expectations for the Israelites, He reminded Moses of His identity, who He was.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bibl**e **Commentary** 2 to provide more insights into the names for God found in verse 2:

- ***LORD*** *(in small caps) is a translation of the Hebrew letters YHWH.*
- *This name is likely pronounced* ***Yahweh,*** *though the original pronunciation has been lost, since the name was considered too holy to be spoken.*

2 ***Verse 2.*** Before God pronounced His covenant stipulations and moral expectations for the Israelites, He reminded Moses of His identity, who He, the giver of the commandments, was. **LORD** (in small caps) is a translation of the Hebrew letters YHWH. Since Hebrew was originally written with only consonants, the vowels for each word were added by the reader, who learned them from teaching passed down by previous generations. This name is likely pronounced *Yahweh*, though the original pronunciation has been lost, since the name was considered too holy to be spoken. YHWH is derived from the Hebrew verb for "to be" and reflects God's self-existence—His ever-present and unchanging nature. Though He was known by this name to Noah (Gen. 9:26), Abraham (12:8), Isaac (26:25), and Jacob (28:16), apparently Jacob's descendants forgot His covenant name and the power, authority, and character it represented. Moses may have first heard this name when God appeared to him in the wilderness (Ex. 3:14-15).

The Hebrew word for **God** (*Elohim*, first used in Gen. 1:1) reflects the majestic, mysterious, eternal nature of this One who created everything. This was no distant deity, however. To the Israelites He emphasized, **"I am … *your* God"** (emphasis added). He was the God who made them, knew them, and was aware of their suffering (Ex. 2:23-25), which was why He delivered them **out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.** God's words were a reminder of the act of the exodus that set Him apart from the false gods of other nations and emphasized His personal relationship with the Israelites.

The words that follow were not conditional requirements for the establishment of a future relationship; instead, they were covenantal responsibilities emerging from the ongoing relationship the Israelites had with the Lord based upon God's past act of deliverance. God had already set them free from their bondage to a cruel, imperfect master (Pharaoh of Egypt) who was only concerned with the Israelites' production (how much work they could do each day). As the Israelites obeyed these words of God they could experience the continued blessing of a relationship with a loving, perfect Master who was concerned for their well-being.

3 ***Verse 3.*** In light of the grace the Israelites had already experienced from this loving God, it would be almost unthinkable that they would turn to **other gods.** Still, it

would be possible. The Hebrew people would be confronted in the future with the gods of the Canaanite people. Thus it was necessary for God to prohibit them from worshiping any other gods **besides** Him. This command was needed in part due to sinful humanity's proneness to gravitate toward false gods and idols.

Other deities were territorial; God alone is sovereign over all creation; as He had declared to His people, "the whole earth is mine" (Ex. 19:5). He was to be their only God, not the first among (or one of) many other deities. There was nothing good to be gained from any other gods; turning to other gods would only lead them back into bondage and ultimately destruction. Only by remaining faithful to Yahweh could the Israelites continue to experience the freedom and life they desired.

This first command reflects an inward focus—related to the heart. There is no one else like God; therefore, He alone is worthy of the people's attention and affection. Without this "heart" commitment to God (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 6:33; 22:37), the Israelites would have neither the inclination nor the motivation to obey the other commandments.

4 ***Verses 4-5a.*** This second command builds on the first by discussing what is improper related to the worship of Yahweh. God's command was clear: **Do not make an idol for yourself.** While the first commandment dealt with the heart, this command deals with the eyes and the hands—an external focus. The Hebrew word for **idol** is used here of any image (carved, shaped, or molded) the people might make to depict their invisible God. Because "God is spirit" (John 4:24), no visible object fashioned **in the shape of anything** created could possibly reflect His nature. Unfortunately, this was one of the first commandments the people disobeyed when they made and offered sacrifices to a golden calf (Ex. 32).

In addition to misrepresenting God's true nature, another danger of idols is seen in Numbers 21:4-9 when the Israelites sinned in the wilderness and God sent poisonous snakes as punishment. Many people died after being bitten. After the people repented, God told Moses to make a snake image and mount it on a pole; anyone who was bitten could look at the snake image and they would be healed. Over seven hundred years later, however, King Hezekiah destroyed the bronze image of a snake because the Israelites had given it a name, Nehushtan, and were burning incense to it (2 Kings 18:4). Though God had commanded Moses to make the snake image for a specific

- *YHWH is derived from the Hebrew verb for "to be" and reflects God's self-existence—His ever-present and unchanging nature.*
- *The Hebrew word for **God** (Elohim, first used in Gen. 1:1) reflects the majestic, mysterious, eternal nature of this One who created everything.*

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bible Commentary** 3 to provide a deeper explanation regarding the first command, ***Do not have other gods besides me.***

- *This command was needed because of sinful humanity's proneness to gravitate toward false gods and idols.*
- *Other deities were territorial; God alone is sovereign over all creation; (Ex. 19:5).*
- *This first command reflects an inward focus—related to the heart.*

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bible Commentary** 4 to point out the difference between the first and second commands:

- *The second command builds on the first; the first commandment dealt with the heart, the second command deals with the eyes and the hands—an external focus.*

(Continued on the next page.)

- *The Hebrew word for **idol** is used of any image (carved, shaped, molded) the people might make to depict an invisible God.*

GUIDE: Refer group members to **Digging Deeper, The Attraction of Idolatry on pages 26-29 (PSG, pp. 24-27)** for more information about idols.

DISCUSS: Question 2 (PSG, p. 17): Where do you see examples of idolatry in our culture?

SAY: The word *jealous* does not reflect the envy, mistrust, insecurity, or suspicion we typically associate with it.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bible Commentary** 5 to explain the meaning of jealous.

- *The Hebrew word for **jealous (qanna)** is used six times in the Bible and only refers to God.*
- *God's nature calls for complete devotion from His people and tolerates no rivals.*
- *Punishing the children for the father's iniquity emphasized the ongoing consequences of an individual's sin on later generations in a family.*

DISCUSS: Question 3

purpose related to a specific event, the people kept the image and eventually venerated it as an idol.

Idols were essential to the worship practices of almost every other religion in ancient times. People would **bow in worship to** and **serve** their false gods of wood, metal, or stone that were fashioned to represent objects in nature **(in the heavens above, on the earth below,** and **in the waters under the earth).** Thus God's command against idolatry called for His people to act differently from everyone else.

DIGGING DEEPER

The Attraction of Idolatry

For a deeper explanation about idolatry, see the article on pages 26-29, PSG, p. 24-27.

5 ▶ ***Verses 5b-6.*** In elaborating on the second command, the Lord said He is **a jealous God.** The Hebrew word for *jealous (qanna)* is used only six times in the Bible and only refers to God. The word does not reflect the envy, mistrust, insecurity, or suspicion we typically associate with the word. In relation to God's nature, the meaning of the word might be better understood as "zealous." It speaks of God's great love and concern for His people. Since trusting and worshiping God is the best thing anyone could do, how loving would God be if He wasn't concerned that His people remain committed to what is best? When considered this way, it makes perfect sense that God's jealous nature calls for complete devotion from His people and tolerates no rivals.

Those who turn away from God will face the consequences of their sin—impacting succeeding **generations.** This does not mean God literally punishes children for the sins of their parents. Throughout the Bible, personal responsibility for sin is emphasized (Deut. 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6; Jer. 31:29-30; Ezek. 18:1-4; Rom. 6:23). Through the prophet Ezekiel, God emphasized this truth of individual, personal responsibility for one's sins: "The person who sins is the one who will die. A son won't suffer punishment for the father's iniquity, and a father won't suffer punishment for the son's iniquity. The righteousness of the righteous person will be on him, and the wickedness of the wicked person will be on him" (Ezek. 18:20).

When God spoke of **punishing the children for the fathers' iniquity,** He emphasized the ongoing consequences of an individual's sin on later generations in a family. This can be seen today, for example, in the unfortunate experiences of children who suffer the consequences of their parents' adultery or addiction to alcohol or drugs. But another continuing consequence of a person's sin is that it is frequently learned and repeated (often to a greater extent) by the person's children and subsequent generations. Thus it is these children, not the fathers, whom God refers to as **those who hate me.**

While those who turn away from God and His commands can impact several generations, **those who love** God and **keep** (obey) His **commands** can have a longer lasting impact on their descendants. God promised that for those who are loyal to Him, He will show His **faithful love to a thousand generations.** Verse 6 is a reminder that God's desire is not to punish people but to shower them with His **love,** which includes favor, kindness, goodness, and mercy—blessings that come from being in a covenant relationship with God. The Hebrew term *chesed*, translated as *faithful love*, is rich in meaning and can also be translated as lovingkindness and covenant faithfulness. As used in these verses, the words **love** and **hate** don't refer to emotions but rather to a person's loyalty or disloyalty to God's covenant as reflected in obedience or disobedience to His commands.

Psalm 16:1-4a

1 **Protect me, God, for I take refuge in you.**
2 **I said to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have nothing good besides you."**
3 **As for the holy people who are in the land, they are the noble ones. All my delight is in them.**
4a **The sorrows of those who take another god for themselves will multiply.**

Verse 1. God deserves priority in our lives because He alone is good and completely trustworthy. This was how David experienced the Lord. As a youth David was described as "a man after [God's] own heart" (see 1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). From his writings and his lifestyle we discover David knew God in a way many people never experience.

(PSG, p. 18): What does it look like to make God first in today's culture?

Alternate: What are the consequences of putting other things before God?

LEADER PACK: Distribute copies of **Item 2: Ten Commandments** handout as a tool related to the Ten Commandments.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

ENGAGE: Invite group members to complete the activity on page 25 **(PSG, p. 18).** Encourage volunteers to share responses.

TRANSITION: In the next verses we see David's poetic expression of devotion to God.

Study the Bible

Psalm 16:1-4a

10 MINUTES

READ: Ask a group member to read Psalm 16:1-4a.

SAY: God deserves priority in

our lives because He alone is good and completely trustworthy. This was how David experienced the Lord.

GUIDE: Refer to the author's comments on **PSG page 19** to explain that God alone is good. God alone is the originator of all that is good. Based on this truth, we know two things:

1. *Good has one Source: God.*
2. *If something is not good, it does not come from God.*

RECAP: Refer to the author's comments on **PSG page 19** about two ways Satan uses our limited, finite understanding, to plant doubt in our hearts concerning God's goodness.

1. *In trials or difficulties, Satan wants us to focus on the pain rather than the purpose.*
2. *Satan seeks to plant doubts about the goodness of God by tempting us to develop a "victim mentality."*

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bible Commentary** 6 to provide information about the names of God used in verse 2:

- ***LORD—Yahweh*** *(also see*

While David was a "warrior" (1 Sam. 16:18), he knew his life was in God's hands. Thus it was appropriate for David to ask **God** to **protect** him**.** The Hebrew word for *protect* is also used of a shepherd keeping a flock (1 Sam. 17:20) or a bodyguard defending someone's life (28:2).

A **refuge** was a trusted place of protection during times of distress. While some Israelites sought safety in false gods (Judg. 10:6) or foreign countries (Isa. 30:1-3), the only trustworthy refuge is found in God. Though we don't know the context in which David made this plea, he regularly faced danger and difficulty. Thus he often asked God to watch over and protect him; many of his psalms refer to turning to the Lord as his only refuge (Pss. 5:11; 7:1; 62:8).

6 ▶ ***Verse 2.*** David did not go to God only when he needed something; his relationship with God was growing and ongoing. He recognized **the LORD** *(Yahweh)* as his **Lord** (*Adonai*). As previously stated above in the commentary on Exodus 20:2, the Hebrew *Yahweh* is God's name with which He made His covenant with Israel. It emphasizes the personal nature of God's covenant relationship with Israel and His self-existence. Yahweh is the one who IS ("I AM WHO I AM," Ex. 3:14) and causes all that is to exist.

Adonai emphasizes one who has authority over another; God is the supreme authority over all that exists. David's use of this name reflects his submission to God and reverence for Him as sovereign over all creation. ◀

This psalm could have been written in the early years of David's life after he was anointed king by Samuel (1 Sam. 16:1-13) or later after David began reigning as king over all Israel (2 Sam. 5:1-5). Whenever the time, David acknowledged he had **nothing good besides** the Lord. No matter what wonderful things David possessed, they did not compare with what he had in his relationship with the Lord. All David possessed came from the Lord as well.

Verse 3. After reflecting on the uniqueness of God, David thought about **the holy people** (literally, "the holy ones"), using the Hebrew word *qadosh* ("holy"). David clarified that he was referring to those **who are in the land—**most likely referring to the Israelites who were set apart by God and trusted in Him. These people, though by no means perfect, heeded God's command to "be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:2).

God said to the Israelites, "you will be my kingdom of

priests and my holy nation" (Ex. 19:6); thus, David could call them **noble.** This word can mean majestic, excellent, or magnificent. David loved these faithful people, noting that all his **delight** was in them.

Verse 4a. Not everyone, however, is faithful to God. David called attention to **those who take another god for themselves,** which may be a reference to the people of pagan nations who worshiped false gods or to the people of Israel who had turned away from God. Rather than receiving the increasing blessings that come from being devoted to God, those people would experience only **sorrows** that **multiply.**

Psalm 16:9-11

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices; my body also rests securely.
10 For you will not abandon me to Sheol; you will not allow your faithful one to see decay.
11 You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures.

KEY WORD: Sheol (Ps. 16:10)— This is the abode of the dead (the underworld, "the pit," "the grave"), where it was believed everyone went after death. Even so, God is there (Ps. 139:8).

Verses 9-10. It makes sense that we should prioritize what is most important. Thus David emphasized that God is to be first because He alone deserves our worship and He alone can provide what is most valuable to us—life—specifically, eternal life. In verses 5-8 David mentioned some of the blessings he experienced in this life from his relationship with the Lord. However, David knew there is more to life than this mortal, earthly existence.

The word **therefore** connects what was previously mentioned with what follows. Because of his relationship with God and all of God's blessings, David proclaimed that his **heart** was **glad** and his **whole being** rejoiced. David did not intend us to see his heart (the center of emotion and will) as separate from the other parts of his life (whole being). Instead, he was likely using a Hebrew style of repetition (using different words to highlight the same point) to emphasize the joy that filled his life.

7 David added that **my body also rests securely.**

page 18).

- ***Lord—Adonai*** *emphasizes God as the supreme authority over all that exists.*

DISCUSS: Question 4 (PSG, p. 20): What experiences from your life reflect the truth that God is good?

Alternate: When are you most tempted to put your trust in something besides the Lord?

TRANSITION: Next we will discover the joy of knowing God is for us and with us, always guiding us on the path of life.

Study the Bible

Psalm 16:9-11

10 MINUTES

READ: Ask a group member to read Psalm 16:9-11.

SAY: David emphasized that God is to be first because He alone deserves our worship and He alone can provide what is most valuable to us—life—specifically, eternal life.

GUIDE: Refer group members to **Key Word** on **PSG page 21** to provide further explanation about the term *Sheol.*

THE POINT God is to have first place in every aspect of life.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to **Bible Commentary** 7 to explain David's rest as he trusted in God:

- *Because God was the priority of his life, he did not fear anything that came either in this life or after death.*
- *Peter quoted from this passage in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:25-28).*

DISCUSS: **Question 5 (PSG, p. 22): What has God done recently that has made you glad and led you to rejoice?**

Alternate: What does it look like to place God first in your life?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Encourage group members to search for objects that could represent idols in today's society (for example, a clock or a watch could represent the idol of time; money could represent the idol of wealth, a smartphone, as an example of attachment and total devotion for a younger generation). After a few minutes of searching, encourage volunteers to share what they found and what their objects represent.

While David's words could be understood as referring to an escape from death or to a resurrection after death, he was probably thinking specifically of the latter. Because God was the priority of his life, he did not fear anything that came either in this life or after death.

In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter called David a "prophet" (Acts 2:30) and quoted from Psalm 16:8-11 as he emphasized the fulfillment of prophecy in Jesus' resurrection. (See Acts 2:25-28. Paul also quoted Psalm 16:10 in Acts 13:35.) David's focus on the Messiah is especially evident in verse 10. God the Father did not **abandon** Jesus (God's **faithful one)** to **Sheol** (the grave). Nor did God **allow** Jesus **to see decay—**a reference to the natural process that happens after a body is buried. While David was "dead and buried" (Acts 2:29) and his body "decayed" (13:36), God raised Jesus to life again on the third day. Only because of Jesus' death and resurrection can we have a relationship with God and experience forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. While David prophesied about the Messiah, his words in Psalm 16:9-11 also expressed his own confidence that even death itself could not separate him (or any believer) from the Lord (as Paul stated powerfully in Rom. 8:31-39).

Verse 11. David continued praising God, who had revealed **the path of life** to him. Centuries earlier Moses had presented the Israelites with two options: "life and prosperity" or "death and adversity" (Deut. 30:15). Moses noted that life would come from loving God, obeying His commandments, and remaining faithful to God (v. 16), while turning away from God would lead to death and destruction (vv. 17-18). David knew how to experience the blessings of life on this earth—by loving and following God. But true life goes beyond what we experience in this life. Thus David expressed confidence that God would faithfully bring him to the life to come, where God's people will experience **abundant joy** and **eternal pleasures** as they dwell forever in His **presence.**

David's words are a reminder that this life is finite; the path or way to true life comes only through faith in Jesus Christ, who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Through faith in Jesus we can experience eternal life (3:16) and joy that is "complete" in Him (15:11).

LIVE IT OUT

How will you actively seek to put God first in your life?

- **Acknowledge.** The starting point for any personal change begins with honestly acknowledging what needs to change. If you do not put God first in any area in your life, confess that to God. Ask for His forgiveness and help in putting Him first in your thoughts, words, and actions.
- **Begin.** Make a commitment to begin each day by putting God first. You can develop the habit of putting God first more consistently by reminding yourself of this truth before you start your day. This will look different for each person, but it could mean saying a prayer when you first wake up, reading your Bible before you do anything else, or quoting a Scripture from memory before you pick up your phone in the morning.
- **Track.** Consider keeping a note-pad or journal this week where you write down every time you sought to put God's perspective and His guidance first in your life. You may want to share this with a friend as a way to encourage your friend to do the same.

ENGAGE

Take a few moments and reflect on your current spiritual circumstances.

What idols are in your life?

How are you putting God first in all areas of your life?

Live It Out

5 MINUTES

GUIDE: Emphasize **The Point: God is to have first place in every aspect of life.**

REVIEW: Live it Out (PSG, p. 23). (see text to the left). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

Wrap It Up

GUIDE: Encourage group members to make time to evaluate if God is first in every aspect of their lives. Remind group members to be aware of potential idols in their lives.

PRAY: "Father, You are good and we love You. Remind us this week of the supreme value of giving You first place in every aspect of our hearts and lives."

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE. **EXTRA!**

Free additional ideas for your group are available at
BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ BRENT BRUCE/ METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART/ NEW YORK (60/7772)

THE ATTRACTION OF IDOLATRY

By Randall L. Adkisson

In a field outside a village in central India, a man snuck away from his family and friends. There he set for himself an idol, an image of his chief deity. in the waning light of the day, Goli took a knife, sharp as a razor, and made long cuts into the flesh of his forearm. He lifted his arms; clasped his hands together; hovered them over the idol's form; and let his fresh, warm blood drain over his god. [1]

A WORLD FILLED WITH IDOLS

Though perhaps a shock to the modern sensibilities of some people, idol worship is still common today. in communities, villages, towns, and cities all over the world—in homes, apartments, fields, caves, and on mountains, men and women bow before shrines to honor gods made by hands.

Archaeologists unearthed a large number of eye idols at Tell Brak in modern northern Syria; so many that they dubbed the location the "Eye Temple." The purpose of the figures is unclear. Some suggest the idols represent worshipers, who would be looking continually to the gods, even in the absence of the actual people who left the objects. Others believe the objects represent the gods themselves. These examples come from northern Syria and date to about 3500 BC.

Genesis first hints at the prevalence of idol worship in reporting Rachel stole and then hid her family's idols (Gen. 31:19). The tone of the story seems to indicate that even then, idolatry was not uncommon. in the Old Testament period, people often recognized national, regional, and individual gods and their idol forms.

From the patriarchs through the later prophets, idol worship was a constant temptation for God's people. Neither warnings nor severe punishment broke them of the idol's lure. On Sinai Moses acquired the Law from God, "You shall not make for yourself an idol" (Ex. 20:4).[2] In the camp below, the newly freed Israelites degraded themselves before an idol constructed by Moses' brother (32:2-4).

The lure of idol worship was not limited to ancient Israel. In fact, throughout most of their history, idolatry was a constant draw that enticed God's people—although to a far lesser extent after the exile. History bears witness, though, that the Jews ultimately found the will to turn completely from idol worship during the intertestamental period. Still, idol worship was ubiquitous in the Gentile world of the New Testament.

Long-established deities had their place in the temples of Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. To these the first century added new images of worship—images of Roman rulers and the national religions.

The New Testament church faced idol worship as a barrier to their witness and an enticement to their membership. Images of the gods were hot-selling items in the marketplaces of the New Testament world. Paul faced craftsmen's wrath when several people responded to his preaching in Ephesus. The artisans accused Paul of cutting into their ability to market their images and of threatening their profits (Acts 19:23-41).

WHAT WAS (IS) THE ATTRACTION OF IDOLS?

Individuals desire to be "normal," to be perceived by others as regular, as part of typical society. Readers today may not understand how far from normal were the demands of God and therefore the people of God. Every group of people with whom Israel related, fought, or came into contact believed in multiple gods and practiced idol worship. These people believed every need of life was under the watch of some god or the other. Procreation of livestock, fields, and family was assured or denied based upon the favor of a god.

Israel often succumbed to the lure of the land in which they resided, whether Egypt, Babylon, or Canaan. Interaction with the surrounding peoples through trade, marriage, and government could not help but entwine God's people with idols. To the New Testament church the apostle Paul would write, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.' "

(1 Cor. 15:33). As today, influence of culture and family too easily swayed the people of God.

Another draw to idol worship was its simplicity of form and promise of results. According to one Old Testament scholar, pagan idolatry was attractive to the ancients because, among other things, it was based on an assumption that frequency and generosity of worship (bringing a lot of food to an idol's shrine) would establish a good relationship with one's god or goddess. ethical living was not required.[3]

Thus, a religion that required only simple forms of payment and ritualistic worship rather than taxing demands of moral standards held a lure for sinful mankind. The Book of Numbers records the simplicity with which Israel could enter into idol worship and remain enmeshed with immorality (see ch. 25).

Idols were pleasing, both visibly and to the touch. Israel struggled to restrict their worship to a God whom no one could see or touch. Although people could experience Yahweh's presence in: (1) creation, (2) His moral obligations communicated through the Law, and (3) His personal intervention recorded in national history, they still could not touch, handle, or see Him.

The allure of a god that could be handled, decorated, bowed to, and transported overcame for many the contradiction of worshiping an item created by the hands of the worshiper. Like present day charms, crystals, and amulets, the convenience and imminence of idols captured people's imaginations. Worshipers felt they could be assured of a god's presence if they could touch or see its image.

"Sex sells" was as true in the ancient world as it is in the modern. Idol worship incorporated many forms of sexual vice. Craftsmen often shaped idolatrous symbols to resemble sexual organs or to resemble humans with exaggerated genitalia. The Scripture speaks of Asherah, a pole or tree representing a sex goddess in the Old Testament. Greeks and the Romans worshiped Artemis and Diana, represented by a multi-breasted idol.

Because many forms of idol worship sought to assure the fertility of the soil and the womb, ritualistic sexual practices were often a part of pagan temple worship. People believed temple prostitution would excite the voyeuristic gods into procreative activities, which supposedly assured successful multiplication of earthy crops, herds, and people.

The images and language of the Old Testament allude to the sexual nature of idol worship. The prophets' words of whoring, adultery, and chasing after the gods of the pagans are blunt and condemning; for instance: "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ TOM HOOKE (66/14/18)

View of the Parthenon at night. Rising over 500 feet at its highest point, the acropolis initially served as a safe place for women and children of Athens during times of battle. Eventually, though, the site had a strictly religious purpose and was the location of several temples, the most prominent being the Parthenon, the temple that honored Athena.

every green tree, and she was a harlot there" (Jer. 3:6b).

STILL AN ISSUE

Both ancient Israel and the early church stood in danger of being seduced by the gratification and promises of gods that could be fashioned by and in the likeness of mankind. Judgment for their sin at times was corporal punishment, as well as the inherent loss of purpose, witness, and influence in their communities. Perhaps the saddest form of judgment's gavel was the loss of generations who watched the compromise of their parents and national leaders and followed them along paths of alienation from a relationship with their true God (Ex. 34:7).

Idol worship in many forms still permeates the land. Today false religions incorporate chants, talismans, and charms in worship. Images of gods reside in Hindu closets and new age shrines. Christians too have long been lured by horoscopes and good luck charms. Amazingly, modern idols retain their attractions.

1. This story came from an experience I had with someone I met during an international mission trip to India.
2. All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Version (NASB).
3. Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2 in The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 45.

Randall L. Adkisson, "The Attraction of Idolatry," *Biblical Illustrator,* Summer 2013, 78-81.