Overview
Adult Bible Study to Accompany
Club VBS®: Truth Trek™

What? Adult Club VBS” Cactus Canyon is a five-session Bible study for adults that is translation neutral and is available only online as a free download. The sessions are designed for participants to explore the Ten Commandments, to gain a deeper and broader understanding of their truths, and to discover and implement life applications.

When? While children are participating in Club VBS: Truth Trek, adults will study the same Bible truths. Or use the Adult Truth Trek Bible study material anytime you need a five-session adult Bible study.

How? Use the Bible study material for teacher preparation and for Bible teaching. Print copies of “Questions to Consider” for all participants and use them to enhance discussion of the Bible content and application of the truths. The “Case Study” for each session can be used to further the discussion of life applications.

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These materials were originally created as “Truth Trackers and the Secret of the Stone Tablets” (Vacation Bible School 2001) by writers LeBron Matthews, Randy Millwood, Marie Clark, and John Magyar. They have been rewritten to accompany “Club VBS: Truth Trek” (Club VBS 2009).
Trek I: The Treasure of Honoring God

Bible Passages: Exodus 20:3-11; Daniel 6:1-13,19-28
Bible Truth: God commands His people to honor Him, to worship only Him, and to live in ways that show devotion to Him.

Most people in today’s world have heard of the Ten Commandments. Unfortunately, many people know little about their content. These ten injunctions provide God’s people with a standard for living. Many people mistakenly believe God cares only about religious behavior. They suppose God will be pleased if they go to church on Sunday or give an occasional offering. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The first four of the Ten Commandments set forth God’s timeless commands for relating to Him and honoring Him. They reveal that God’s involvement in our lives is comprehensive. An appropriate response to God’s Commandments is evident in our daily conduct. Often people ask what actions honor God and what actions dishonor God. Daniel set an example of actions that honor God.

Important Terms in Exodus 20:3-11; Daniel 6:1-13,19-28
• Satrap—was the title for a government official in the Persian Empire. The office was comparable to that of a modern governor.
• “King Darius, live forever”—was the appropriate formal greeting for the king. It was like saying “Your Honor” to a judge today.
• The law of the Medes and Persians—was the legal standard in the Persian Empire. Even the king had to obey this law.
• The exiles from Judah—were Jewish refugees and former prisoners of war living in Babylon. They had been deported there when the Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem.
• Sabbath—was the day of worship in the Old Testament era.

Honor God by Setting Good Examples (Dan. 6:1-13,19-28)
Centuries after Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, Daniel modeled behavior that honors God.

Live for God Consistently (Dan. 6:1-9)
We honor God when we consistently live for Him. Daniel lived in such a manner and others took notice. He was born and reared in the ancient nation of Judah. When he was a young man, the Babylonian Empire conquered his country. Daniel was taken as a prisoner to the city of Babylon. Babylon is located in modern Iraq and was about 1,000 miles from his home and family. Despite the tragedy he had experienced, Daniel determined to live
for God. He rejected food and conduct that conflicted with the teaching of Scripture. God blessed Daniel, and Daniel became an important civil servant in the Babylonian government.

Daniel was an old man and still living in the city of Babylon when Persia captured it. In these new circumstances, Daniel remained faithful to the Lord. Then the Persians recruited him into the administration of their empire. Darius, king of Persia, wanted a strong central government and organized his vast empire into districts. He appointed satraps to govern the districts. The title satrap means “protector of the kingdom.” Three “administrators” had complete authority over the numerous satraps and were accountable only to the king. Despite his advanced age and foreign birth, Daniel was appointed to be an administrator.

Because of Daniel’s superior work, Darius soon decided to place him over all the government. Daniel’s political enemies were jealous and sought to discredit him. Since Daniel’s job performance was exemplary, there was no basis for accusing him of negligence or corruption. The sole path for implicating Daniel was his religion.

Apparently Daniel was the only significant person in the king’s government who worshiped only one God. His enemies knew if legislation were enacted that mandated the worship of a deity other than his God, Daniel would violate the law. Therefore they approached the king with an idea for a new ordinance. Their proposal appealed to the king’s vanity, and their flawless manners hid their treacherous purpose. “King Darius, live forever” was the appropriate protocol for greeting such an absolute monarch. The list of officials in verse 7 indicates the conspiracy against Daniel included officials at many levels of government. It also alerted the king that the group represented the opinion of many in his government. If approved, the law was limited to 30 days. Thus the devious requirements of the legislation may not have seemed unreasonable to this powerful ruler.

During that era of history, the Persians captured lions for exhibition and other service. The Hebrew word for den suggests “a pit.” It was presumably a large pit with numerous rooms in which the captive lions were kept. Depriving the beasts of food provoked them into becoming instruments for gruesome death. The conspirators apparently decided to find out if Daniel’s commitment to God was greater than his fear of a violent death.

Confronted with an undivided opinion and his own ego, Darius enacted the legislation. “The law of the Medes and Persians” denotes the legal code of the Persian Empire. This law was binding on king and commoner alike. It could neither be changed nor ignored.

**Pray Frequently Even When Challenged (Dan. 6:10-13)**

We honor God when we pray frequently—even when others challenge us. The events of Daniel’s life forged an absolute faith in God. His exile and the destruction of Solomon’s temple stripped his religion of its recognizable external form. Rather than becoming disillusioned with religion, Daniel found solace in prayer. He routinely stopped his activity three times each day and prayed. His custom was to go into his room, away from the demands of the world. There he faced Jerusalem, knelt, and prayed. The significance of facing Jerusalem was twofold. First, the city had been the site of the holy of holies, which was the symbol of God’s presence among His people. Second, in his dedication of
the temple, Solomon committed Israelites to facing the temple during prayer (1 Kings 8:35, 38, 44, 48). Thus Daniel figuratively humbled himself in obedience before the presence of Almighty God. The passage of the new law neither altered Daniel’s religious behavior nor caused him to hide his faith. Daniel deliberately defied a law that was incompatible with the law of God.

Daniel’s habit of praying repeatedly produced an amazing attitude in him. He is described as praying and “giving thanks to his God.” Despite having lived most of his life in exile, Daniel continued to thank God. When a person spends time in prayer, he or she gains a new perspective on a situation.

The conspirators watched Daniel carefully. They went as a group to confirm his actions and discovered he was continuing to pray to God. Immediately they confronted Darius. In a rhetorical question, they repeated the law’s content including its penalty. When the king acknowledged the law had been enacted and recalled its irrevocable character, the group identified Daniel as having broken it. The term, “one of the exiles from Judah,” distinguished him from other government officials.

**Trust God Even When Threatened (Dan. 6:19-23)**

Darius did not want to execute Daniel. However, under Persian law no pardon was possible for Daniel. Therefore, the elderly man from Jerusalem was cast into a pit confining hungry lions. Daniel was in an impossible situation. Physically he was no match for the brutal beasts. Human assistance was unattainable. Escape was not feasible. Death was inevitable.

The Bible records that Darius spent a restless night. As the sun began to peek over the horizon, the king rushed to the lions’ den. What was going through his mind? Did he really expect Daniel to be alive? His actions probably resulted more from grief than from genuine anticipation of seeing Daniel again. His anguished voice divulged he did not expect an answer to his inquiry. His words almost mocked Daniel’s faith. The force of Darius’s question in verse 20 is, “Who is stronger, God or the lions?”

Daniel had never wavered in his fidelity to God. Had his loyalty cost him his life? No! From the darkness of the pit came a sound, the familiar voice of Daniel. The usual royal greeting “O king, live forever!” revealed Daniel was calm and composed. Being among starving lions all night had not harmed Daniel physically or emotionally. If anything, spiritually it produced benefit. He immediately attributed his deliverance to God. Then he asserted his innocence of all crimes against the king.

The king’s attitude turned from gloom to joy. He ordered that Daniel be taken up from the lions’ den. The king was free to do so because technically he had fulfilled the law. Daniel had been thrown into the lions’ den.

We honor God when we trust Him in threatening situations from which there seems to be no escape. An examination of Daniel revealed no damage to his person. He had not been harmed “because he had trusted in his God.” God has promised never to leave or forsake His people. Therefore circumstances become irrelevant. God provides exactly what is best in every situation. We only need to trust Him.
Encourage Others to Honor God (Dan. 6:24-28)

The king acted swiftly. He ordered the execution of the men who had conspired against Daniel. As was the custom in the ancient world, the entire family of the guilty person was sentenced to die. Daniel’s example caused the king to acknowledge the deity and greatness of God. However, the biblical narrative does not imply Darius rejected the traditions related to being a Persian king.

The detail that the lions brutally killed the guilty men before they touched “the floor of the den” confirms that Daniel’s survival cannot be attributed to these animals. On this occasion their behavior was normal for large carnivorous animals.

The event made an incredible impact on Darius. His stance toward God changed. He no longer questioned God’s power to act. He knew from experience that God does intervene in people’s lives and that He does what no other can do! While the king’s decree for his citizens to fear God does not constitute complete faith in God, it certainly was a step in that direction.

Frequently the change is gradual. Nor do new converts to Christ behave like more mature Christians. After salvation comes, God takes the rest of our lives to change us into the people He wants us to be. Yet when we honor God, others will notice and some will be encouraged to honor Him too.

Honor God Through Worship (Ex. 20:3-11)

The Ten Commandments are recorded in Exodus 20:3-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21. Quotations and references are found in various other passages in both the Old and the New Testaments. The first four Commandments pertain to honoring God. The only reference Jesus made to these four Commandments is in Matthew 4:10. On that occasion Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13, censuring Satan for the temptation to worship the devil.

Honoring God includes worshiping only Him, not substituting anything for Him. The First Commandment prohibits the toleration of other gods. The verb for “have” (Ex. 20:3) has the sense of “to come into being.” Hence the idea is that we are not to permit another entity to become our deity. The monotheism of Israel was not an evolution of religion but a revelation from God. Israel was never to add additional gods to the one true God who had revealed Himself at Sinai. The reality of other gods is not an issue to God’s people. The true issue concerns commitment and loyalty. The commandment insists God’s people acknowledge and worship nothing else as God. We are to be loyal to Him alone.

The Second Commandment (Ex. 3:4-6) forbids substituting anything for God, including religious ideas fabricated by human beings for authentic truth revealed by God. “In the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below” should be taken in the widest possible sense. It includes the whole of creation and everything produced by created beings. People use materials God created when they fashion idols or fabricate religious theories. Idols are an attempt by a created being to improve on what the Creator did. God’s people should worship Him, embracing only the truth God has revealed. The first person pronoun in verse 5 is emphatic. It is followed by the divine personal name of God and the term for deity. The second person pronoun “your” designates a personal relationship with God. “A jealous God” stresses that God is not willing to share His worship and love with any other being.

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God warned His people about the consequences of rejecting Him and thus violating the Commandment. God’s nature is to forgive. Note the difference in “punishing . . . the third and fourth generation” and in “showing love to a thousand generations.”

The Third Commandment forbids the misuse of God’s “name” (Ex. 3:7). While this commandment clearly condemns profane swearing, that application does not exhaust the meaning of the prohibition. In ancient Hebrew thought, a name was more than a label of identification. It represented one’s character. God has revealed Himself to humanity through His names. Some names suggest the complete mystery and profound otherness of God. Other names declare specific facts. The word for “in vain” designated anything worthless or imaginary. Thus using God’s name lightly does not take God seriously. It is equivalent to calling His nature worthless. In one sense, abuse of God’s name calls God’s reality into question.

The Fourth Commandment requires one day of rest each week. From a practical viewpoint, humans (as well as animals and machines) all require periodical maintenance for optimum performance. Failure to observe God’s schedule produces stress disorders and medical diseases. From a spiritual perspective we need to take one day each week for worshiping God. By doing so, we express gratitude for everything we have and acknowledge our dependence on Him. Apart from God’s involvement, we would still be dust on the ground (Gen. 2:7). Honoring God includes using His name only in appropriate ways and devoting and using one day each week for Him.

**Bible Story Summary**

Darius (Dan. 6:1) ruled the Persian Empire for 36 years (522-486 B.C.). He was a capable and powerful king. He reorganized the administration of the empire, delegating authority to highly qualified individuals (vv. 1-2). However, jealousy and political infighting were as common in this bureaucracy as in others. Daniel was an outsider who achieved high office within the government. He became the target of a conspiracy, but his work ethic and job performance remained flawless. Unlike his peers, he believed in the one true God and lived for Him consistently.

Daniel did not permit threats—even to his life—to alter his devotion to God. The lions’ den (v. 7) was a large pit that housed captive lions. The Persians kept these animals for public display and use in executions. When his religious behavior placed him in danger, Daniel continued to trust in God. His faithfulness encouraged Darius to worship God.

Daniel’s life demonstrated the principles of honoring God set forth in the first four Commandments. The First Commandment (Ex. 20:3) demands that God be given the ultimate priority in life. The Second Commandment (Ex. 20:4-6) prohibits substituting anything for God and worshiping it. All of the prohibited items were created by God. The Lord is the true and living God. He is a God of grace who is to be worshiped in the manner He desires (Ex. 20:7-11).
Trek 1: Questions to Consider

1. How did Daniel obey the first four Commandments related to honoring God?

2. What did his obedience cost Daniel?

3. How do I or will I obey the first four Commandments?

4. What does it cost me or might it cost me in the future?

5. What is the main truth I discovered about God in this study?

6. What difference will that truth make to my everyday life?

7. What commitment do I want to make to God as a result of today’s Bible study?
Trek 1: Case Study

But at What Cost?

As her boss passed, Rebecca said, “Good morning, Mr. Bronson.” As part of her commitment to demonstrate the difference Jesus makes in her life, she had begun the habit of greeting folks at work with a warm smile and a genuine wish for them to enjoy a good morning.

Rebecca had been employed by the law firm as an administrative assistant for just over three years. She had worked for only two people: Marjorie Swanson and now Samuel Bronson. Marjorie was the lawyer who first hired her. Marjorie was not a Christian but described herself as tolerant, willing to permit people their various belief systems. She and Rebecca had enjoyed a good relationship and some meaningful conversations about Jesus and the difference between having a religion that one practices and a relationship that one enters into.

Rebecca did everything at work to the best of her ability, modeling a strong work ethic to those around her. Marjorie appreciated the performance and tolerated the faith. She permitted Rebecca to have a coffee mug with inspirational phrases on it, to keep a Bible at her desk for early-arrival devotionals, and to host a brown-bag lunch and Bible study for believers and any others who might be interested. Displaying the mug and Bible was Rebecca’s way of personalizing her workspace. Everyone else personalized their workspaces, and few others could crank out the work like Rebecca. Marjorie Swanson saw this as a fair trade-off.

Last spring Marjorie had jumped at the chance to follow a lifelong dream of working for a Washington, D.C., firm. Rebecca was transferred to Mr. Samuel Bronson, a man who is personally distant. He does not believe lawyers and other employees should mix. While Mr. Bronson does permit employees to personalize their work stations, he doesn’t allow any personalization that offends others. As far as he is concerned, matters of religion are offensive.

Needless to say, the relationship between Rebecca and Mr. Bronson has been strained at best. Bronson knows he has never had such efficient help. In addition, Rebecca meets people so well that clients all love her. Yet the sight of the mug and the Bible and the knowledge his administrative assistant is such a religious fanatic that she leads a Bible study at work—all of this is a little more than he can handle.

Sam Bronson lives in the tension between his personal preference that all of this stop and the recognition that the courts vacillate as to whether employers legally can limit such expression. That tension spills over in the way he relates to and treats Rebecca. He is gruff around her. He refuses to come to her work station, always insisting she come to his office. He loads her up with extra assignments—particularly on weekends. He cuts into her lunch time with last minute “urgent” correspondence.

Rebecca has never thought of herself as a religious fanatic, but she is absolutely and irrevocably devoted to Jesus Christ. She is well aware that her devotion to Christ is the crucial issue in this work relationship. She also knows she easily could relieve the tension at work by being private about her faith. Like anyone else she would like for her work
environment to be absent of stress. But she refuses to go undercover as an ambassador for Jesus. So she continues to be open about her beliefs without provoking others by obnoxiousness and to do her work with excellence, honoring God.

This determination to honor God is costly to Rebecca. The immediate cost is the tension she experiences from Mr. Bronson and the extra work she is assigned. In addition, some employees recognize the situation and wonder why Rebecca doesn’t make some subtle changes to correct the situation. They too are beginning to think of her as a radical. Other employees, who themselves are radically unchurched, find a lot to make light of in this situation. What they call lighthearted ribbing is costing Rebecca respect from some of the unsaved people she had targeted for her lunchtime Bible study. Of course, the ultimate cost could be having to transfer to another lawyer or possibly even losing her job.

Yet Rebecca persists. Her desire to honor God and trust Him to take care of the rest is greater than her fear of the consequences of retreating in her dedication.
Club VBS®: Truth Trek™
Digging for God’s Treasures

Trek 2: The Treasure of Honoring Family

Bible Passages: Exodus 20:12; Genesis 45:1-11; Mark 7:9-13
Bible Truth: God commands His people to honor their parents, to demonstrate recognition of their significance in all aspects of this relationship.

The Fifth Commandment directs God’s people to honor their parents. The Commandment teaches children and youth to obey and respect their parents, but it has significant application for adults as well. When children break this Commandment, the harmony of the family is injured. When adults break it, the nation suffers. So serious is the latter application that the most comprehensive teaching by Jesus on the Fifth Commandment concerned the treatment of parents by adult children (Mark 7:9-13). Nor can the validity of the Commandment be limited to the lifetime of the parent. Children still can honor deceased parents. They can live in positive ways their parents approved of and can affirm the positive values that guided their parents’ lives. The example of Joseph illustrates appropriate treatment of parents by their adult children (Gen. 45:1-11).

Important Terms in Exodus 20:12; Genesis 45:1-11; Mark 7:9-13
• The land which the Lord your God gives you—was the land of Canaan. This phrase relates to the promise God made to Abraham (Gen. 13:14-15) and the conquest under Joshua.
• Your tradition—was the extensive rules for obeying Old Testament laws that scribes of first-century Judaism had collected or developed.
• Pharaoh—was the Egyptian king. He had absolute power over the nation and its citizens.
• Goshen—was the northeast region of the Nile Delta. The land was extremely fertile.

Ways of Honoring Parents (Gen. 45:1-11)

Seek Knowledge of Their Welfare (Gen. 45:1-3)
We honor our parents when we seek knowledge about their welfare. Because his brothers resented and were jealous of Joseph, they sold him into slavery and thus forcibly separated him from his father. Despite his misfortune, Joseph remained faithful to the Lord in Egypt, even when it resulted in imprisonment. However, God blessed Joseph and he miraculously was appointed to the second highest government office in the nation.

A famine eventually led Joseph’s brothers to Egypt on two occasions to find food. Joseph’s brothers may not have recognized him because he spoke and dressed like an Egyptian after living there many years. At first Joseph did not reveal his identity. After testing his brothers’ integrity, Joseph discovered their characters had altered. They loved their father and were loyal to each other.
Joseph desired reconciliation with his estranged family. Because the occasion was so personal, Joseph ordered the retinue that attended him to leave the room. Alone with his brothers, Joseph disclosed his true identity. Overwhelmed by his emotions, Joseph burst into tears. His weeping was so loud it could be heard throughout his residence. Immediately after declaring “I am Joseph!” he asked about the health and well being of his father. Joseph’s paramount interest in the presence of his brothers concerned his aged father. His brothers hesitated in answering as a result of their fear. They recognized their guilt in causing the separation and realized Joseph was in a position to enact revenge. He was accountable only to Pharaoh. Joseph easily could have executed 11 foreigners without any repercussions.

**Seek an Awareness of God’s Actions (Gen. 45:4-7)**

We also honor godly parents when we seek awareness of what God is doing in our lives and theirs. Joseph did not kill His brothers. Instead he implored them, “Come close to me.” He wanted reconciliation, not revenge. Because of his faith in God, Joseph viewed life with a radically different perspective. Rather than attribute his situation to circumstance or luck, he saw the hand of providence. This understanding went beyond the immediate events that elevated him from prison to power. He attributed even his misfortune to divine guidance.

Joseph reassured his brothers and told them not to feel remorse and guilt about their past actions towards him. He recognized that while their motives had been evil, God employed their actions for good. God had sent him ahead of them to save human life. “Two years” refers to the time the famine already had lasted. Nine years earlier Pharaoh had had bizarre dreams (Gen. 41:1-45). None of his advisors or priests could interpret the meaning of these dreams. Joseph alone had told him that seven years of unparalleled prosperity would be followed by seven years of famine. Furthermore, he had advised Pharaoh to erect buildings to store grain and to stockpile food during the prosperous period.

Here Joseph warned that “five years” of famine remained. “Plowing and reaping” signified the initial and the final tasks in agriculture. Joseph knew any effort to farm would be a complete failure.

The statement “to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives” reveals God’s concern extended beyond just the family of Jacob. A significant percentage of the earth’s population was threatened by this catastrophe. God had acted to spare Egyptians, Hebrews, and others. Joseph was the instrument of God’s “great deliverance.” This Hebrew term describes an escape from danger. Survival was not due to good luck but was an expression of God’s mercy.

**Seek to Provide for Their Welfare (Gen. 45:8-11)**

We honor our parents when we are aware of their needs and seek to provide for their welfare. Having revealed his identity to his brothers, Joseph turned his attention to providing for his father’s welfare. His provision was based on his faith in God. Verse 8 shows Joseph credited God for his being dislocated to Egypt. The consequences of this statement were twofold. First, he released his brothers from their blame in his misfortune. This ensured that no guilt marred the personal relationships between family members. Second, he attributed his success to God and not personal ability or luck. The phrase
“father to Pharaoh” described the position Joseph filled. It was an idiom for an intimate adviser. Just as a father instructs a child in the best course of action, so had Joseph instructed Pharaoh. (See Gen. 41:33-37.)

Parents who love their children want them to succeed in life. Joseph’s message to his father, Jacob, in effect was, “My life has been a colossal success!” Jacob discovered his lost son not only was alive but also had attained position and status beyond anything father or son ever imagined possible. Second only to Pharaoh, Joseph was the most powerful man in the world. What a jubilant shock this news must have been to an elderly father. Little wonder he had difficulty believing it (Gen. 45:26).

Parents and children need to share time together. The pain of separation had lingered too long in the lives of Joseph and Jacob. Therefore Joseph requested that his father come immediately to Egypt. Ordinarily one might expect the son to travel to his father. However Joseph knew Jacob and his family would “become destitute” unless they moved to Egypt. There Joseph could care for his father’s physical needs and protect his family during the last five years of the famine.

**Responsibility of Honoring Parents (Mark 7:9-13)**

Honoring parents includes accepting and following through on our obligations to them. Jesus quoted the Fifth Commandment on at least two separate occasions. Once he repeated it in conjunction with other Commandments (Matt. 19:19; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20). On another occasion Jesus pointed out the scribes and Pharisees deliberately were violating the Fifth Commandment. He condemned their practice of giving to God money that should have been used to care for their adult parents.

“Corban” is a technical term from the Old Testament for an offering made to God. It denoted items to be sacrificed to God or used in the sanctuary. Greedy individuals who declared their wealth to be Corban were not required to immediately transfer ownership to the temple. Rather, this practice was the equivalent of making a will today. One could declare wealth to be Corban and retain it until death! Anything called Corban, even rashly, was a vow to God and could not be changed—not even if the one who made it wanted to change or if the vow wronged one’s parents. This reasoning was based on Numbers 30:1-2.

Jesus understood what the scribes didn’t—God’s Word is for the benefit of humanity. All Scripture is derived from the holy will of God and never contradicts itself. To ignore the Fifth Commandment is to declare invalid the Word of God, depriving it of authority! There can be no valid justification for not honoring one’s parents.

**Benefits of Honoring Parents (Ex. 20:12)**

Honoring one’s parents benefits the child and the parents, their families, and their nation. The verb translated as honor literally means “to be heavy.” The word normally denotes treating a person or an object as being weighty in the sense of being exceptional or impressive. To say a person “carries a lot of weight” implies the individual being described is important and should be treated accordingly. The Hebrew word here conveys a similar sense. The position of responsibility and authority inherent in being a parent deserves respect and privilege.
The Bible reveals that God’s ideal foundation for society is the family. A family is more than a tool for propagation. It is the social unit whereby people define their relationship to one another. A primary relationship within the family is that between parents and children that imparts unity to different generations. Perpetuation of society relies not only on procreation but also on initiating children into its way of life. People develop their basic social aptitude and form their initial behavior patterns within the family. Parents should be the principal instructors for developing these essential skills of life. Both father and mother are treated with equality in this Commandment. Both have responsibility in rearing children and are entitled to respect from their children.

In many cases, individuals other than biological parents fulfill this role. Some choose to adopt children. The adopted children of these parents should honor their adoptive parents for choosing them and for the love, security, generosity, and instruction they have provided through the years.

The promise to prolong Israel’s days in the land that God promised related to living in the land of Canaan. God gave the Ten Commandments just prior to Israel’s conquest of that territory. In essence, God declared that as long as Israel maintained appropriate family values, the Israelites would be able to hold the land conquered under Joshua. However, when children ceased to honor their parents, the fabric of society would unravel and the nation would be unable to maintain the integrity of its borders. Other nations could occupy the territory. This promise reflects a simple principle. Families are the basic social component of the nation. If the smaller elements of society—the families—are weak, then the larger societal unit—the nation—also will be weak.

Paul quoted this commandment as the basis for children’s obedience of their parents. In both Ephesians 6:1-3 and Colossians 3:20, Paul addressed children directly. Their presence within the church was taken for granted. Obedience to parents is part of the divine law. Paul’s theological understanding was complemented by pragmatic reasons. In every culture the stability of the society depends on parental control. Obeying one’s parents is proper behavior. Children need to recognize that some things have to be accepted even though at the time they may not understand them. Obedience is an expression of fidelity and trust.

The promise in Ephesians 6:3 doesn’t mean all obedient children will live longer than disobedient children. Yet as a general rule, living according to God’s laws permits a person to live a longer and fuller life. Furthermore, living by the principle of honoring one’s parents results in stronger families and thus in stronger nations.
**Bible Story Summary**

Jesus condemned religious practices that allowed a person to refuse to give appropriate care to elderly parents. In sharp contrast to the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day, Joseph had demonstrated generations earlier genuine honor for his father. Joseph was the 11th of 12 sons. The older brothers did not have the same mother as Joseph and his younger brother. Their jealousy led them to sell Joseph into slavery and to lead their father to believe a wild animal had killed him. Joseph ended up in Egypt where both success and downfall characterized his life. However, he rose from being a prisoner to become the second highest officer in the government. Only Pharaoh was higher. Famine forced his brothers to make two trips from Canaan to buy grain in Egypt. On the second journey, Joseph revealed to them that he was their long lost brother, and he sought to care for his aged father. Joseph recognized the work of God in everything that had happened to him. He understood that the seemingly bad incidents of his early life had made possible his helping his family when a worldwide catastrophe came.
Trek 2: Questions to Consider

1. How did Joseph honor his father and his brothers?

2. How did Joseph’s honoring his family affect their lives?

3. How did Joseph’s honoring his family honor God?

4. If either or both of my parents are living, how am I doing at being informed about what’s important in their lives? about what God is doing in their lives?

5. How up-to-date am I on my parents’ physical and social welfare?

6. Joseph met the needs of his aging father. How have I sought to meet discovered needs in my parents’ lives? Are my actions guided by a concern for their dignity?

7. How has honoring my parents benefited them? me? our extended family? society around us?
   OR
   How has my failure to honor my parents impacted them? me? our extended family? society around us?
   Are there changes I need to make in my relationship with my parents to better honor them and God?

Note: If neither of your parents is living, answer questions 4–7 based on other relatives or friends who depend on you for part of their care or could benefit from your assistance.
Clay and Ed are brothers. They were close while growing up but years and a mobile American society have produced their current separation. Clay is a computer software designer for a company in the Silicon Valley of California. Ed is a professor for a small private college in Connecticut.

Though both appear to have moved as far away as possible from the southwest Missouri town where they were reared, they are on separate coasts simply as a result of circumstances. The distance between them was not born of anger, merely of the different directions life has taken them. Typical holiday exchanges (visits, cards, impersonal gifts, and so on), e-mails (mostly forwarding entertaining messages), and an occasional phone call describe the sum of their adult relationship.

Clay is a believer in Jesus Christ. Ed, a religious man, is not a believer. The expressions of their faith are as different as they are. Clay seeks to know and walk with the Lord each day. Ed seasonally takes part in various activities and projects in hopes he can somehow earn God’s attention while practicing his own form of religion. This difference is at the heart of their current dilemma.

A few months ago their parents were planning a fall trip to Connecticut to visit Ed and take in the beautiful fall foliage. However, before reaching Saint Louis they were involved in a tragic automobile accident at the hands of a drunk driver. Clay and Ed’s dad was killed in the accident. Their mom was paralyzed from the waist down and has spent weeks in and out of hospitals having various kinds of surgery. Each surgery was followed by lengthy therapy efforts and extended recovery. The pain and expense has mounted steadily for their mother as well as her sons. Their families have sacrificed for both sons to spend large amounts of time in Missouri attending to their mother’s medical and other needs. Clay’s and Ed’s employers have been patient beyond all expectation. However, there is a growing sense of urgency that they need to get back to their own families and work.

Ed and Clay’s mom, Jane, is also a believer in Jesus Christ. Though she mourned the sudden loss of her husband, she has found constant solace in her relationship to the Lord. Through all the surgeries, therapy, recovery, and changes around her, she has maintained her faith in Christ and her confidence that the two sons she raised will do the right thing. To this point, the right thing has involved their making extended visits to be with her and their helping with her expensive at-home care.

Today is a day the whole family has waited on for months. Ed, Clay, and Jane are meeting with her primary care physician for a thorough assessment of the Jane’s progress and the prognosis for her future. The news is not good. Various explorations into her spine have revealed the damage is even worse than first thought. Although doctors initially were hopeful Jane could recover enough use of her legs to live independently, they now have concluded this will not happen.

These three adults sit in the doctor’s office, hold each other, and cry. Their tears are for more than the loss of mobility and the awful reminder of the accident and their dad’s death. Their tears are also those of desperation. The questions flood their minds, but no one is brave enough to voice them: Where do we go from here? What do we do next? Can
we afford long-term, home-based care? If not, what situation do we look for? Is Mom willing to leave her friends in Missouri for either California or Connecticut? The list is long. The answers are evasive.

For Ed the answers are cold and calculable. His academic background and personalized religion have made him a pragmatic person. For Clay the answers are driven by a deeper question, *How do I bring glory to God and show respect to my mother and my father in this situation?*

The cold hard fact is these three people have a whole set of decisions to make. What they decide in the next few weeks will set a course for the quality of life each will enjoy from this day forward. How important is glorifying God and honoring parents? How can they do that? Who decides? What’s a believer to do?
Trek 3: The Treasure of Respecting Life

Bible Truths: God commands His people to respect life, to protect the sanctity of human life and of marriage.

The Sixth and Seventh Commandments concern the preservation of life and the purity of marriage. They prohibit murder and adultery. Life is a precious gift from God. As the giver of life, God reserved for Himself the authority to terminate life. No individual has the right to take away another person's life. In today's Bible study, Jonathan demonstrated respect for life by helping his friend David escape death.

God created both male and female human beings. Without diminishing His role as the giver of life, God delegated procreation to them. With the power to reproduce and the capacity to express love through physical means came responsibility for the employment of human sexuality. In His teachings, Jesus went beyond the actual deeds to the attitudes that generate murder and adultery. Jesus proclaimed that anger and lust also violate these Commandments.

Important Terms in Exodus 20:13-14; 1 Samuel 19:1-7; 20:24-42; Matthew 5:21-22,27-28

• Philistines—were bitter enemies of Israel. The Philistines waged war against Israel for many years until David finally conquered them.
• New Moon—was a religious festival in ancient Israel.
• Raca—is an Aramaic swear word that likely means “empty-headed.”
• Sanhedrin—was the supreme Jewish council in the first century. Its members had authority over religious issues and some civic matters.
• Heart—is where a person makes decisions; another term for the will.

Actions that Demonstrate Respect for Life (1 Sam. 19:1-7; 20:24-42)

Warning Others of Danger (1 Sam. 19:1-3)
We show respect for life by warning others when they are in danger. When Jonathan learned his father intended to kill David, the prince immediately warned his friend.

As a young boy David had defeated Goliath, the champion warrior of the Philistines, bitter enemies of the Israelites. The power of the Philistines often threatened the existence of Israel. Once more Israel prepared to do battle with this foe, this time across a valley floor. Each day Goliath advanced against the Israelite line and challenged the Israelites to send a defender to determine the outcome of the war. Terrified Israelites refused to accept
the summons. David’s older brothers served in the army. While visiting them, David killed Goliath with his slingshot. Immediately thereafter, the army of Israel attacked and routed the Philistine army.

Later, David became an officer in Saul’s army. Under the capable leadership of David, his troops enjoyed success. His campaigns were far more successful than those of other generals, and David became a popular hero. Initially King Saul was grateful. He offered his daughter Merab as a wife to David. However, David declined on the basis that he and his family were unworthy of joining the royal family. David eventually married Michal, another of Saul’s daughters, and so became Saul’s son-in-law.

David’s popularity and his marriage into the royal family became a perceived danger to Saul’s dynasty. Although the threat was not real, Saul feared David and took calculated steps to eliminate David as a potential rival. In the ancient world, kings customarily used death as the means to remove a competitor. Thus Saul instructed his son Jonathan and his military officers to kill David.

Jonathan and David enjoyed a well-established friendship. Instead of assassinating David, the prince warned him of Saul’s plans. As heir to the throne, Jonathan had the most to lose if his father’s fears were genuine. Nonetheless, the prince’s love for David and his respect for life prevented him from carrying out the plot. He revealed the details of the conspiracy to David and helped him devise a plan of escape. Jonathan’s actions sought to prevent the death of an innocent man and bridle the guilt of another man.

We should follow the example of Jonathan. Parents have an obligation to warn their children of potential dangers. Some of these dangers may come from the acts of other individuals, but they also may result from the actions and attitudes of the child. Likewise, when we observe friends in danger, we have a responsibility to warn them before they are hurt physically or otherwise. Respect for life demands that people be warned about any peril to their existence.

### Interceding for Those in Danger (1 Sam. 19:4-7)

Demonstrating respect for life includes interceding for those in danger. Instead of taking sides, Jonathan sought reconciliation. Having warned his friend David, Jonathan acted to remove the threat. He spoke to his father, Saul, and assured the jealous king no real danger existed. Jonathan reminded his father that David’s past actions always benefited Saul. David’s battles with the Philistines ensured the survival of Israel. David’s victories had allowed Saul to rule the nation in security. If Saul then killed David, Saul would murder an innocent man. This vile act would harm Saul, not benefit him.

His son’s words moved Saul, and he vowed not to kill David. “As surely as the Lord lives” emphasized the serious nature of Saul’s contemplated actions. This oath connected David’s life with that of Israel’s God. Thereby Saul recognized killing David would be a crime against God. Immediately Jonathan went to David and shared the good news. David returned home and his status at court was restored.

First Samuel 19:9-24 indicates Saul changed his mind again and attempted once more to take David’s life. War with the Philistines again erupted. David led the Israelite army into battle and won a great victory. In the celebration that followed, Saul grabbed a spear and hurled it at David. David fled into the night. His wife Michal used a disguised idol to trick Saul’s men into thinking David was asleep in his bed. This deception granted him time
to escape. Later the prophet Samuel and the Spirit of God hid David from the king’s search parties.

**Taking Risks for Those in Danger (1 Sam. 20:24-42)**

We show respect for life by putting ourselves at risk to protect those in danger. Evading the forces hunting him, David made contact with Jonathan. A puzzled David sought to determine the reason for Saul’s anger. He wondered if the outburst came from a sudden rage or an altered attitude. Jonathan volunteered to discover his father’s intentions and inform his friend about the hazard he faced.

In ancient Israel a new moon was marked by special religious rites, including a feast in the king’s home. As a prominent member of Saul’s family and an important military figure, David was expected to participate. However, he remained in concealment outside Saul’s house. When Saul observed David’s chair was vacant, he first concluded his son-in-law had violated some ritual prescription and therefore was ineligible to observe the ceremonial meal. Such innocent deeds as accidental contact with a dead animal (Lev. 11:38) or a diseased person (Lev. 15:11) would make one ritually unclean.

When David remained absent for the second day, Saul inquired about him. His designation of David as “the son of Jesse” may have been a verbal slur ridiculing David’s family background. Jonathan offered a plausible explanation that David’s family was celebrating a special sacrifice in their hometown. David had requested permission to be absent from Jonathan, who had the authority to grant David’s request and had done so.

When Saul heard this story, he launched into a vehement denunciation of his son. He attributed an odious birthright to him and accused him of treachery. Then Saul ordered his son to summon David so he could be executed. When Jonathan questioned the reason for Saul’s decision, Saul’s wrath exploded. He grabbed a nearby spear and hurled it toward his son! Fortunately the spear missed its mark. His action reminds us that people who go into a murderous rage against others fail to show respect for life. Saul’s anger nearly destroyed the person he claimed he was protecting. For the remainder of the day Jonathan sorrowfully contemplated these events.

The next morning Jonathan went to the field where David was hiding. He brought a young boy with him. Standing in the field he drew back his bow and told the boy to go and find the arrow he was about to shoot. Jonathan released the bow’s string, and the arrow flew past the boy running in the field. Jonathan then yelled, “Isn’t the arrow beyond you?” The words were a prearranged signal (1 Sam. 20:22) that Saul intended to put David to death. They warned David to go into exile to preserve his life. Jonathan risked his own life but helped preserve the life of an innocent friend.

**Sanctity of Human Life and Marriage (Ex. 20:13-14)**

We show respect for life by demonstrating our recognition of the sanctity of human life and of marriage and by doing nothing to violate that sanctity. The Hebrew verb in Exodus 20:13 means “to murder” and designates both premeditated murder and deaths described in English Common Law as “man slaughter.”

Some people believe in legalized abortion as a way of protecting a woman’s right to choose. They argue that opposition to abortion leads to discrimination against
economically disadvantaged women and girls. However, the real issue concerns life. In reality, both abortion and murder defy legitimate authority, specifically God’s sovereignty over His creation. According to the Bible, no individual is qualified or has a right to determine whether another lives or dies. The power to give life and the authority to take life both rest exclusively with God. Therefore, whenever human beings terminate a human life, they usurp divine authority! Hence murder, even in the guise of abortion, is in reality rebellion against the sovereignty of God.

Marriage is the cornerstone of society. It is the foundation on which the family is constructed. According to the biblical model, one man and one woman are joined to create an inseparable entity (Gen. 2:24). Within this union God demands absolute fidelity of one partner to the other. When one partner acts unfaithfully, the commitment is weakened and society is threatened. Therefore, adultery can never be condoned. Sexual purity conforms to God’s design for life. Within the boundaries of marriage the sexual union is one of God’s most wonderful gifts to humanity. Apart from marriage it denigrates God’s creation by reducing a person created in God’s image into a commodity for physical gratification.

**Attitudes That Prevent Respect for Life (Matt. 5:21-22,27-28)**

Showing respect for life includes avoiding attitudes that lead to expressions of contempt for another person or that ignore marriage vows. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus expanded our understanding of the Sixth and Seventh Commandments. He asserted that limiting their application to actual murder and physical adultery does not exhaust the meaning and application of the two Commandments.

Jesus’ words emphasize a fundamental truth. We do not obey the prohibition against murder merely by not taking another person’s life. Such limited application fails to understand the scope of the Sixth Commandment. The law reveals a more basic problem, human anger. Jesus condemned the evil disposition at the root of the deed. The initiation of the physical act of murder is wicked rage. The Sanhedrin was the supreme Jewish council in the first century. Its members exerted final authority over religious issues and some civic matters. An accused person could stand trial before this council. Sometimes the death penalty followed the verdicts.

*Raca* seemingly was an Aramaic swear word that probably means “empty-headed” and was an insult to one’s intelligence. *Fool* was another derogatory term. Jesus warned that such insults injure the one using them. Such grievous hatred actually violates the Sixth Commandment and deserves to be punished with death. Jesus concluded that vile anger—the kind that leads to hostile words—is in its very nature murder. Anger is a crime committed at the seat of an individual’s will. Left unchanged, such evil can lead one into hell!
Modern society presumes the Seventh Commandment is outdated. In our society morals often are viewed as subjective. Each person can decide what is suitable behavior. Sexual cheating has become an everyday reality for many of today’s marriages. It is as common within the church community as it is among non-Christians. However, Jesus concluded the Commandment still had great validity. He revealed the motivation that produces infidelity. In an era when premarital sex and extramarital sex are prevalent, a holy God still forbids immorality. He is greatly concerned with the preservation of marriage and the family.

“Lustfully” refers to being excited about something and contains the sense of desire. Lust is the strong direct appetite for sexual satisfaction resulting from a false evaluation, specifically that the object of passion is a potential sexual partner. This is a false conclusion because that possibility would be inconsistent with the will of God. Thus Jesus was talking about looking at a woman with sexual desire for her. The attitudes and actions of Christians should demonstrate undivided respect for life.

**Bible Story Summary**

Saul was the first king of Israel. Jonathan was his son and the heir to his throne. David was a popular war hero and Saul’s son-in-law. Saul became jealous of the popularity that David enjoyed with the people of Israel. Saul began to imagine that David wanted to seize the throne. At that time, kings in other countries killed their rivals and anyone who aided these condemned individuals. Jonathan did more than risk his opportunity to gain the throne of his father. He demonstrated respect for human life by risking his own life when he interceded for David.

Though Jesus quoted the Sixth and Seventh Commandments on other occasions, He set forth in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7) an exposition of both prohibitions. He went beyond the obvious application to reveal the attitudes that ultimately produce these actions. He asserted that anger and hate could lead to murder. Saul’s behavior illustrated the accuracy of Jesus’ statements.

Jesus also declared that looking with sexual desire at a person of the opposite gender (other than your spouse) is adultery. Looking in such a manner reveals an inner decision.
**Trek 3: Questions to Consider**

1. Jonathan invested time, effort, and creativity to help his friend David. Do I have a friend who needs my time and assistance? Am I willing to make an investment in this friend’s life?

2. Do my thoughts and attitudes toward others reveal that I value them as God’s creations—even those with whom I disagree or am in competition for a job or a position in the community?

3. Do my actions and conversations reveal that I value others, or are they more readily identified as character assassinations?

4. Am I able to control my jealousy and anger so that, unlike Saul, I do not desire or attempt to harm others? If I do have anger management problems, what measures can I take to control my anger and thus honor God and show respect for others?

5. Does my view on abortion reflect the belief that all human life is created by God and should be protected? Do I express my view openly when people state opinions that do not reflect the sanctity of human life?

6. Do I respect my marriage vows? Do I avoid or retreat from people and situations that could lead me to infidelity?

7. What specific ways can I, on a daily basis, demonstrate my respect for life and for my marriage?
Trek 3: Case Study

Friendships Are Never Easy!

Sarah and Shelley lived next door to each other in their early childhood. From the sand pile in the backyard to the dollhouse in Sarah’s upstairs bedroom, the two were virtually inseparable. Sarah’s parents—though avowed agnostics—permitted Sarah to attend church with Shelley. After all, the friendship seemed important to their little girl, and the opportunity to have some time alone on Sunday morning was valuable to them. These two girls spent most of their time together until . . .

Sarah was in fourth grade. After years of antagonism and tension, her parents’ marriage ended. Sarah and her mom moved to another side of the metro area, and Sarah’s friendship with Shelley ended.

At her new school, Sarah met Cliff. Like most boys his age, Cliff didn’t want the other guys to know he liked a girl, so he went to extremes to cover up his interest in Sarah.

By high school, the other guys envied Cliff. He was popular, lettering in three sports, and his girl friend—Sarah of course—was the kind the other guys wanted. She was petite, kind, attractive, smart, and popular. She and Cliff were the queen and king of their homecoming court. Both received scholarships to the state university (his in baseball; hers in academics). Their relationship was too good to be true. Almost.

Though publicly Cliff and Sarah seemed to be the ideal couple, they had a private life laced with secrets. From cocaine habits to self-absorption, Cliff had a need to feed off of others, and Sarah was the key other. Sarah’s broken home and lack of a father figure left her co-dependent. When Sarah wasn’t cooperating by meeting Cliff’s needs, tension soared. The consequences were often brutal. Sarah frequently suffered verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. One unexpected pregnancy ended in abortion. Makeup hid the scars of physical fights. Large crowds and shallow conversations protected her from revealing her private fears.

The couple lived together their last year in college and decided to marry after they graduated. The pastor of a nearby church was contacted to officiate at the wedding; the date was set. To prepare for the wedding, the pastor insisted on counseling sessions—not to uncover the past but to lead the couple to discover God’s answer for their future: Jesus Christ. In compliant fashion, Cliff and Sarah prayed to receive Jesus Christ into their lives and their new home with one significant difference. Sarah genuinely sought forgiveness and purpose; Cliff merely appeased the preacher.

After the wedding, Cliff settled into his new coaching job at the junior high school, and Sarah began working as a sales representative with a local manufacturing company. The cocaine use, self-centeredness, and abuse continued.

Wanting to take the next step in her decision for Christ, Sarah attended a women’s ministry group in the church where they were married. The leader had a glow about her that immediately caught Sarah’s searching attention. Her name? Shelley. Sarah’s first friend then became her first real friend. Shelley listened to Sarah, engaging her in Bible-centered
discussions about abundant life in Jesus. Over time the relationship grew to the point that Sarah could not hide her own private crises any longer. In a burst of emotion, the entire saga poured through rivers of tears—all about the fears, drugs, physical harm, verbal abuse, and abortion.

The circumstances were tragic. The consequences? They certainly included Cliff’s eternity and Sarah’s Christian life, but they also involved Shelley’s role as a true Christian friend. Friendship is never easy.
Trek 4: The Treasure of Respecting Others

Bible Truth: God commands His people to respect the rights of others, to relate to them in ways that help them feel secure about their property and reputations.

The last three Commandments (Ex. 20:15-17) concern an individual’s possessions, both physical property and perceived reputation. The Eighth and Ninth Commandments prohibit stealing and telling lies about another person. The Tenth Commandment warns against coveting. God commands His people to respect the rights of others, to relate to them in ways that help them feel secure about their property and reputations. Jesus taught that every person must decide which is more important, relationship to God or material possessions (Matt. 6:19-24). Zacchaeus decided to trust Jesus as his Lord. His actions thereafter gave evidence of the profound change Jesus made in his life. The teachings of Jesus and the case of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) reveal the primary importance of one’s spiritual condition (Luke 19:1-10).

Important Terms in Exodus 20: 15-17; Matthew 6:19-24; Luke 19:1-10
- Jericho—was located 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem at one of the few crossings of the Jordan River. It was on the major road from the east and an important center of commerce.
- Chief Tax Collector—bid and contracted with the Roman government to collect certain taxes. The term chief probably means he hired others to do the actual collection.
- Covet—describes a desire that often leads to an effort to have the object desired.
- Money—or mammon (KJV) here includes all physical wealth: currency, property, and other possessions.

Respond to Jesus for Salvation (Luke 19:1-10)
Zacchaeus had extensive wealth but a sinister reputation. However, Jesus transformed Zacchaeus and gave him a new life that was independent of what he had and what others thought of him. Zacchaeus chose to be governed by Jesus rather than material possessions and the opinions of others.

Jesus Cares for Us (Luke 19:1-5)
Jesus and His disciples were proceeding to Jerusalem from Galilee. They followed the traditional route along the eastern side of the Jordan River. The road crossed the river near Jericho and began the ascension to Jerusalem. Jericho is only 15 miles northeast of the city of Jerusalem. However, Jerusalem is 2,500 feet above sea level. Jericho is 740 feet
below sea level. The road between the two cities is circuitous and steep, complying with the treacherous passes in the high cliffs west of the river. The geographic features bequeathed Jericho with a strategic location. Jewish pilgrims combined with commerce to the east brought heavy traffic through the city.

The name Zacchaeus means “righteous one.” However, unlike many biblical characters, this one failed to live up to his name. He was a tax collector. He had bid and contracted with the Roman government to collect certain taxes. Under Roman law he was entitled to exact a profit from those he taxed. The government set quotas for taxation but never established strict regulations for their collection. The system presented unlimited opportunities for exploitation. Unscrupulous collectors frequently overcharged to increase their revenue. The term “chief” probably means Zacchaeus hired others to do the actual collection. As chief tax collector he was especially hated both because of the excessive profits he made and because of his collaboration with the occupation forces of Rome.

As the result of its heavy traffic, Jericho was one of the region’s most lucrative locations for collecting taxes. Zacchaeus presumably received a percentage on all the commodities that passed through the city. He likely was guilty of the evils common to his profession. He certainly acquired great wealth. His riches enabled him to enjoy an affluent lifestyle. However, his prosperity failed to satisfy his real needs in life. As a companion to its profit, his profession had brought the hatred of his neighbors. Associates were foreigners or people who feared his political power, not real friends. His most significant need was a genuine relationship with God.

As Jesus made His final journey to Jerusalem, the Lord was a controversial figure. His popularity had diminished as the nature of His teachings became more obvious. Some of the common people still were attracted to Jesus, but each day more of the populace were persuaded against Him. Most of the masses were just curious about the Rabbi who generated such bitter debate. Great crowds gathered to see Him. These crowds grew larger as Passover approached.

Zacchaeus was attempting “to see who Jesus was.” Was he attracted to Jesus by a quest for religious peace? Or was he merely curious? Even if Zacchaeus’s search for religious peace were subliminal, it must have influenced his movement. His small stature prevented him from seeing over people or from forcing his way into their midst. No one would make way for the detested tax collector. To see Jesus, Zacchaeus dashed up the road ahead of where the crowd had assembled. He located a sycamore tree suitable for his purposes. The sycamore was easy to climb because of its large, low hanging branches.

Jesus soon came into sight. Then He addressed Zacchaeus by name. Jesus had been to Jericho previously and may have learned the name of the infamous tax collector. Or He may have used divine insight. Whichever the case, Jesus recognized Zacchaeus and initiated conversation at a personal level. Jesus’ conversation must have shocked the crowd, especially those devoted Jews on their way to celebrate the Passover.

This bold public act by Jesus indicated acceptance of a person whom others rejected. For Jesus the welfare of an individual was always more important than taboos or social protocol. Thus Jesus invited Himself to dine in this man’s home. Jesus not only demonstrated acceptance when He spoke but also by dining with Zacchaeus He revealed the extent of His acceptance. This acceptance was unconditional. Jesus did not demand His host change his ways before the meal.
Jesus Changes Us (Luke 19:6-9)

Zacchaeus was unaccustomed to such treatment. Other Jews would have nothing to do with him. But Jesus was going to his house! Zacchaeus descended from the tree as rapidly as possible and welcomed Jesus into his house. The crowds observed everything. They quickly expressed their opinion of Jesus’ decision. The Greek word rendered “mutter” sounds like the buzzing of angry bees. Most Jews of Jesus’ day considered a man like Zacchaeus to be unclean. Entering the home of an unclean man was sacrilege. Fellowship with him contaminate Jesus in the minds of the religious pilgrims.

“Lord” (v. 8) conveys its full Christian meaning here. Zacchaeus’s use of the word here shows he had repented of his past behavior and had placed his faith in Jesus. He had been transformed by Jesus. By using “if,” Zacchaeus was not denoting his possible innocence. He was providing an emphasis concerning those cases in which he had defrauded people. Half of his considerable assets would be donated to charity. The remainder would be used to amend the injury he had caused others. Wealth no longer was important. Zacchaeus had a new value system.

According to the Old Testament, one who confessed acquiring property unjustly was required to return the stolen property and add one fifth its value as compensation (Lev. 6:5; Num. 5:7). Restitution of “four times the amount” was restricted to stealing a sheep (Ex. 22:1; 2 Sam. 12:6). The excessive restitution Zacchaeus promised reveals the depth of his remorse and the extent of his transformation. People show respect for others when they make amends for disrespectful behavior and when they help others in need.

We show respect for others when our behavior gives evidence we have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Jesus’ words in verse 9 were as appropriate for the crowd as they were for Zacchaeus. They may have been intended to help Zacchaeus comprehend what had occurred. Jesus’ acts of acceptance and grace were concrete expressions of God’s salvation. Jesus did not base Zacchaeus’s salvation on his willingness to make restitution. Zacchaeus’s change in attitude was the result of his salvation. Nor did Jesus make race the basis of salvation. Rather He expressed the verdict that the true “son of Abraham” responds to God in faith (see Luke 3:8).

Jesus Came to Save Us (Luke 19:10)

People receive salvation through repenting and trusting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. “Son of Man” was Jesus’ favorite self-description. It occurs 84 times in the four gospels, 83 of which were spoken by Jesus Himself. The term designates Jesus as God coming in human flesh. It identified Jesus with humanity (yet at times amounted to a claim of deity). Jesus seems to have chosen the appellation because of its rarity. He filled it with new meaning based on “the Suffering Servant” passages of Isaiah (Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13—53:12).

Jesus’ visit in the home of Zacchaeus emphasized His mission on earth. The purpose of the incarnation was for Jesus “to seek and to save what was lost.” God took the initiative in salvation. Nearly 2,000 years ago He sent Jesus for our salvation (John 3:16). The Son of God became a human being. He lived a perfect life but people executed Him on a cross. However His death was not merely the tragic end of a misunderstood life. Jesus died for sinners even though they were still participating in sin (Rom. 5:6,8). His death was God’s
ultimate expression of love for us. The Bible shows that Jesus died to save people from the consequence of their sin. Nor did Jesus remain dead. On the third day God raised Him from the dead and He is alive today!

God still seeks sinners and convicts them of their sins. Conviction is the result of the Holy Spirit putting the truth of the gospel before the lost individual. Conviction has happened when a person realizes a change is needed in his or her life.

Although we cannot comprehend completely how something that happened so long ago in such a far away place can affect us today, God says it has the power to transform sinners into saints. Salvation is a matter of repentance and trust. This means turning from your present lifestyle and accepting what Jesus did for you. Just ask God to save you and He will do so. Eternal life is a free gift.

**Respect the Rights of Others (Ex. 20:15-17)**

The last three of the Ten Commandments concern certain rights that God gives to individuals. People have a right to hold material possessions and to expect others to describe their reputations accurately.

The Eighth Commandment (v. 15) forbids stealing. The word for *steal* means to take something from another person without that person’s knowledge or consent. All ancient law codes prohibited stealing. Whereas other codes commonly called for death and mutilation, the Bible emphasizes restitution. The biblical idea behind ownership is that God owns everything. However, He gives to individuals and to groups the sole authority to hold and to use specific property. Therefore, stealing disregards God’s decision concerning the use of property.

The Ninth Commandment (v. 16) originally concerned the legal process. Israelites were to be honest in formal legal testimony. However the Bible clearly expands the principle to everyday conversation. The word for *testimony* was derived from a verb that means “to repeat.” The word for *false* has the sense of being “untrue or without basis.” God’s people must never repeat words about others that are not true or are groundless. The reputation of every person is a valuable possession. It should not be tarnished or stolen by lies or empty rhetoric.

The Eighth and Tenth Commandments are closely related. The Tenth Commandment prohibits coveting. This prohibition provides dependable guidance for life. The word for “covet” describes a desire that inevitably leads to an effort to have the object desired. This desire begins with the visual impression made by the object or individual. Hence coveting objects or individuals will lead to violations of other commandments. For example, desire for another man’s wife leads to adultery or desire for another woman’s ring leads to stealing the ring.

**Recognize the Place of Possessions (Matt. 6:19-24)**

Respect for others begins with assigning material possessions the proper place in our lives. Material possessions can never be secure. In ancient Judea clothing, grain, and precious metals were valuable commodities. However, expensive garments frequently were ruined when tiny moths ate holes in the fabric. Rodents and mildew consumed grains. Metals
corroded and lost their value. Even when an owner could prevent natural destruction, thieves remained a serious threat. The stone and wood structures of the region offered little resistance to a determined criminal. Therefore, Jesus advised against placing too much value on such items. Pests, corrosion, and criminals still threaten the value and custody of possessions. Jesus’ advice remains valid today.

If a person’s objective is to lay up treasures, logically he or she should select the most secure storage area. Since pests, corrosion, and thieves do not exist in heaven, it is the superior location. Therefore, a wise individual invests in what God considers valuable. “Heart” is a biblical term for the will. In other words the decisions a person makes about what is valuable govern how he or she lives every day.

Most activities in life are dependent on the ability to see. Light illuminates the world in which people exist. If they have healthy eyes, they can see what they do and where they go. They can avoid danger and learn new facts. However, if they are blind, everything appears to be dark. This reality from the physical world has a spiritual parallel. If Christ is the Lord of one’s life, He determines the decisions that one makes. This person then lives in light and has a better perception of reality. On the other hand, if material possessions dominate one’s desire, that person moves through a black darkness, unable to see even a few inches ahead.

Behind the choice of where to lay up treasure and where to fix one’s vision is the ultimate choice of one’s master, God and money. Here “money” is inclusive for all physical wealth. It includes material property as well as currency. A wise individual chooses to serve the Creator, not something that is itself a created object. Material property possesses certain value. However, the value is nothing compared to spiritual treasure. One should live his or her life in such a way as to respect the Creator by assigning material possessions their proper position in one’s values.

**Bible Study Summary**

Zacchaeus was an agent of the despised Roman government. He amassed significant personal wealth through abuse of the corrupt tax system. However, his money could not increase his physical stature or lessen the hatred others felt toward him. One day Jesus traveled through his town. Zacchaeus ascended a sycamore tree to see over the crowd that surrounded Jesus. This tree was easy to climb because of its large, low hanging branches. Jesus invited Himself to dine with Zacchaeus, a sign He had accepted this outcast. Zacchaeus vowed to make restitution to those he had defrauded. In doing so, he promised to go far beyond what the Old Testament law required in such cases.

Jesus reminded people that earthly wealth is unreliable. Natural disasters or criminal behavior frequently eradicate it. In contrast, spiritual investments always yield a profit and last for eternity. Jesus insisted that one choose between having material things and serving God. This does not mean wealth is sinful but that it must be kept in perspective. Serving God begins by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. Though we do not deserve to be saved, Jesus promises to save us if we will believe in Him. When He saves us, He transforms our values as well as our destinies.
**Trek 4: Questions to Consider**

1. When Zacchaeus met Jesus, his life was transformed. Have I placed my faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord? If not, what measures am I willing to take to meet Jesus and allow Him to transform my life when the Holy Spirit leads me to do so?

2. After Zacchaeus met Jesus, the people around him saw a great change in his life. Have I seen a change in someone else's life because of an encounter with Jesus? How did seeing that change impact my life?

3. Are there circumstances in which I find it difficult to respect the rights of others? If so, what are they?

4. What steps do I need to take to change my attitudes and actions so that I respect the rights of others?

5. Zacchaeus tried to make right the wrongs he had committed against others. Is there someone I have wronged? If so, what can I do to try to make things right with the person? with God?

6. What are obstacles I need to overcome to effectively witness to others about the change Jesus has made in my life?

7. Whose life can I impact because of the change Jesus has made in my life?
Trek 4: Case Study

The Ripple Effect of Change

Rich took the job for several practical reasons: the hours were flexible enough so he could continue his education; the pay was excellent for a part-time job; and the boss described himself as a churchgoer. That last reason was of particular importance.

Rich had worked with sheet metal on other jobs. He was not afraid of hard work. But he also knew the rigors of ministry education in a Bible school would demand much attention. The ingredients were all present for on-the-job tension: hard, demanding work and a personal mission driven by a call from God to a different career. The boss would be the key ingredient. Since his boss was a churchgoer, Rich was convinced he would be more understanding of occasional schedule challenges with school. He knew this boss would be someone he could respect!

Accepted in school and hired in a new job—things couldn’t get any better than this! Then came his first day on the job. The blinders came off quickly as Rich was introduced to the difference between a believer in Jesus Christ and a churchgoer.

During his youth, Rich simply could not comprehend someone choosing to attend church services regularly. Though he had been raised inside America, he had been outside the influence of the Christian message. To him church had been a word that appeared on wedding invitations from high school friends and was a landmark by which he gave directions. However, as a young adult Rich experienced the forgiveness and presence of Jesus in his life. Then he came to understand that church is a community, a group of people dedicated to the Lord. A year later the Lord called him to pursue a Bible school degree as preparation for serving in ministry.

On day one of his new part-time job, Rich found disrespectful posters prominently displayed in the break room. He heard off-color jokes and saw embarrassing e-mails circulated on the company’s Intranet. He was nicknamed “preacher boy” with a less-than-flattering tone. He was cussed at and fussed at. The work was hard, but not in the way Rich had expected.

Confused and naive about such things, Rich arranged to meet with the boss and let him know what was going on behind his back. The meeting was informative. However, Rich was the one who learned something new. He found that his boss—though he did attend church—had not placed his life into the care and custody of Jesus Christ. Now the situation was even worse. Rich’s boss attended church, managed his business like those who are unsaved, and knew that Rich was disappointed.

Rich faced a great challenge: How do I respect this man? For the next several months he set out to endure what he must. He determined to stand up for what was right, demonstrate a Christlike attitude, and illustrate to his boss that there is more to life than empty religion. In all he did, Rich showed respect for his boss and his position. He determined to see and act toward this man as a person Jesus loved.

During those months Rich prayed for personal guidance as well as for the work of the Holy Spirit in his boss’s life. The consequences of his choice to show respect were difficult to endure—particularly on the heels of such high expectations.
However, patience and persistence paid off. The day finally came when Rich was able to explain to his boss why he had shown respect in spite of their differences. Through that conversation Jesus became real to Rich’s boss. As Rich discipled his boss, this man’s life changed—every part of it—including what he did in the workplace.

The ripple effect was great. Other employees came to Christ because of the change in the boss’s life. Then members of their families were brought into God’s kingdom as they witnessed the change in their spouses’ or parents’ lives. The network continues to grow. And why? Because one man chose to show respect to another.
Trek 5: The Treasure of Obeying God

Bible Passages: Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 10:17-27
Bible Truth: God expects His people today to live by the principles of the Ten Commandments, loving God supremely and loving others as we love ourselves.

The Ten Commandments are more than a rule book. They reveal the principles by which God expects His people to live. As we have seen, these principles often are more profound and more comprehensive than a superficial glance might suggest. The essence of the Ten Commandments can be summed up as loving God supremely and loving others as we love ourselves.

Important Terms in Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 10:17-27
• Eternal life—denotes more than length of life without termination. It is synonymous with salvation.
• Treasure in heaven—was a first century Jewish idiom that referred to what God considers consequential.
• Neighbor—designated all of humanity as revealed by Jesus in the parable of the good Samaritan. (See Luke 10:25-37.)
• The Law and the Prophets—was an idiom for all the Old Testament. It was derived from the Jewish structure of the Old Testament in three major sections: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

Keep the Commandments (Mark 10:17-21)
Although Jesus approved of living by the Ten Commandments, He knew that no one can receive eternal life simply by keeping them. After Jesus had blessed some children (Mark 10:16), a distinguished man approached Him. According to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, this man was a young official, possibly the head of his local synagogue (Matt. 19:20; Luke 18:18). He also was very affluent (Mark 10:22). By most standards he was extremely successful. In a society that venerated the oldest men, he was a leader while still in his youth. In a region that abounded with poverty, he had great riches.

The young man “ran up to” meet Jesus. He did not want to miss an opportunity to talk with this Teacher. Kneeling before a teacher was not customary, so his act implied an extraordinary reverence for Jesus. The man made a genuine effort to find the answer to a question that greatly disturbed him, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” He addressed Jesus as “teacher,” an indication of his respect for the Master. The addition of “good” was a compliment, showing the deep impression Jesus’ teachings had made on the young man. However, the question Jesus then asked indicates He was not entirely pleased with how the youth addressed Him.
Jesus replied with another question forcing the young man into deeper contemplation and directing his attention to God. The designation “good teacher” related to human achievement and merit. The ruler considered Jesus to be a teacher of great reputation and desired instruction from such a notable source. Then he himself would perform the deeds required. Jesus attacked this entire rationale. If Jesus were merely an eminent “teacher,” He was not qualified to answer the question. All people have sinned, and no mere mortal could be “good.” Only God possesses absolute goodness. Thus only God can set forth the condition for eternal life. Jesus’ question did not imply He was not God. Rather it demanded closer examination of Jesus’ identity. Subsequent words reveal Jesus considered Himself to be deity.

The ruler’s intellectual ability, his position and status, and his material possessions failed to satisfy his real need in life. This need was spiritual. He apparently recognized that even his devout lifestyle could not bring him into a right relationship with God. He sought some condition over and above what he already was doing. He failed to comprehend that by faith alone can one be right with God, not by any deed(s).

“Eternal life” denotes more than a length of life without termination. It is synonymous with salvation. The phrase describes the quality of life from conversion throughout eternity. Thus eternal life is characterized by a permanent, unbroken fellowship with Jesus. It is the gift of God’s grace and can never be obtained by one’s own merit.

Jesus further directed the young man’s attention to God by referencing several of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:12-16). Everything He said except “do not defraud” is almost word for word from the Ten Commandments. This phrase is from Leviticus 19:13 and is an application of both the Eighth and Ninth Commandments. The last six Commandments concern human relationships. How we relate to other people is one visible means of discerning our obedience to God’s commands. Jesus challenged the rich young ruler to evaluate his life in light of God’s Word.

The young ruler claimed that since his childhood he had obeyed these Commandments. Without doubt, he was sincere in this assertion. However, his compliance had not provided the security he desired in eternal matters. Jesus didn’t dispute the man’s claim, but He didn’t agree with it either. Jesus wanted the man to acknowledge that in his heart he had broken some of the Commandments. Jesus certainly considered the command to love one’s neighbor (see Matt. 22:39-40) as the true meaning of the Commandments He quoted. It soon became apparent the man did not love his neighbor as himself.

Jesus “looked” intently and directly at the young man. Jesus perceived the man’s sincerity and replied to him in love. Because He loved the rich young ruler, Jesus wanted him to receive eternal life. Jesus did not specify what was missing in this man’s life. Instead He told what must be done to correct the situation. Jesus commanded the man to make three decisive moves. First, he was to sell all his possessions. Second, he must take the profits and distribute them among the poor. Last but most important, he was to follow Jesus. God then would give to him the eternal security he was seeking.

“Treasure in heaven” was a first century Jewish idiom that referred to the things God considers consequential. Herein lies the heart of the rich young ruler’s problem: He and God had different values. His concept of success was defined by his wealth. It provided his identity and he trusted in it for security. God desired for him to rely on God for his identity and security.
Use Your Wealth Appropriately (Mark 10:22-25)

Wealth is not to be loved or served but used to help others. This young man’s love of wealth and its accompanying affluent lifestyle prevented him from receiving eternal life. He relied on his wealth to provide his needs and his pleasures in life. Obedience to Jesus’ command required absolute trust in God. This meant more than trusting God to furnish the previous standards of living. Trusting God entailed complete self-denial. It meant trusting God when things are not provided. The rich young man was forced to choose between his wealth and trusting God. His money meant more to him than eternal life.

Jesus does not require every person to sell his or her possessions. This condition concerns this specific case. However, the general principle is applicable to everyone who desires eternal life. Trusting God is essential to receiving eternal life.

The difficulty here was not the wealth but the person’s response to wealth. The rich rarely want for the necessities of life because they can purchase them. This ability gives them a false sense of security. They think their wealth can provide every need. However, the old adage that money cannot buy happiness holds true. Genuine inner peace cannot be bought with money. It is the free gift of a loving God. But receiving this gift requires ultimate trust in God alone.

The disciples were shocked at Jesus’ words. They had been reared under a philosophy loosely based on certain Old Testament passages about wealth. According to this interpretation, wealth is a blessing from God. The disciples thought if someone was wealthy, God had blessed that person. Likewise, if an individual was impoverished, sin had hindered God’s blessing. This idea is a gross misunderstanding of Scripture. Although God blesses certain individuals (as He had Job and Abraham) with great wealth, this does not imply every rich person is righteous. Nor does it suggest every poor person is an infidel.

Jesus repeated His statement concerning wealth (vv. 23-24). This time He called His disciples “children.” Jesus disclosed the only way to enter the kingdom of God is through childlike faith. Christ wants us to understand that putting one’s ultimate trust in God is the only prerequisite for eternal life. For the wealthy and for many who want but do not have wealth, this is extremely difficult. It means they must transfer dependence on physical assets to trust in an unseen God.

The next words of Jesus are clear. He was talking about an ordinary sewing needle and an animal. The eye of a needle was the smallest opening familiar to the average person of that day. The camel was the largest creature common to the region. Jesus used an exaggeration to illustrate His point.

Using wealth to help others shows it does not have priority in our lives and it shows love for others. Zacchaeus (see previous session) realized that a personal relationship with Jesus was more valuable than money. The rich young man failed to see this reality.

Depend on God for Salvation (Mark 10:26-27)

Salvation can come only from God. The disciples took Jesus’ words literally. Because of their philosophy, they identified wealth with the blessing of God. They concluded if it was impossible for those whom God blessed to be saved, then no one qualified and salvation is impossible. This conclusion bewildered them. They expressed their confusion vocally, “Who then can be saved?”
Jesus pointed out a basic mistake. The rich young ruler considered salvation as something that can be achieved by human effort. He (and apparently also Jesus’ disciples) did not grasp it is entirely the opposite. Salvation is a gift of God and can be received only as a gift. We must rely solely on God for salvation. We do not hold the resources for salvation. God alone can save!

God certainly can save a rich man. God will save anyone with complete trust in Him. This trust entails total self-sacrifice. This comes from an evaluation of one’s condition as God sees it. Physical things such as wealth and mental ability have only a temporary existence. This existence is very unstable. The value of gold, stocks, bonds, and other forms of wealth all fluctuate. A sudden economic recession can wipe out a fortune. A tiny unseen virus can ruin personal health. Is one really wise to measure success in life by such fragile standards? In contrast, the eternal life God gives can never be diminished or taken away. In the end it alone has true value. Therefore, we need to place our ultimate trust in a God who loves us. We do this when we give God priority in our lives. When we trust Him, He saves us.

Love God and Love Others (Matt. 22:36-40)

Jesus taught that people live by the principles of the Ten Commandments when they love God supremely and love others as they love themselves. After Jesus had outwitted the Sadducees, the Pharisees then attempted to refute Him and His teaching. They selected an expert in the study of the law of Moses. The test question he chose reflects the popular notion that the law contained 613 separate commandments. Each of these was given certain weight, some more important than others. Thus the Pharisee sought Jesus’ opinion about the greatest commandment. Jesus used Deuteronomy 6:4-5 to respond. This Old Testament passage is the highest expression of God’s uniqueness. It became the basic formula for Israel’s absolute monotheism.

In the New Testament, the Greek word for “love” (agape) has particular significance. In almost every case it refers to God’s relationship with humans or the way of life based on that love as revealed in the cross. The word does not describe God but rather the nature of God defines the word. To love God is to have a personal commitment to Him. Such commitment keeps the law in its proper perspective. If this commandment about loving God is observed, the rest follows automatically.

The terms “heart,” “soul,” and “mind” are used together to identify one’s whole being. In Hebrew thought, the heart is the place of decision and the seat of human consciousness and reason, especially to hear the Word of God. The soul was an idiom for life itself or the individual living that life. Mind refers to one’s intelligence.

Jesus defined neighbor with the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. “Neighbor” in His teaching designates all of humanity. By referring to people loving themselves, Jesus was not condoning selfishness. He was merely acknowledging the truth that people do love themselves.

Jesus indicated these two principles related to loving God and others were not only the most important but also were the basis for the remainder of the Scripture. At the time of Jesus the Old Testament was organized into three major sections: the Law, the Prophets,
and the Writings. The Law and the Prophets became an idiom for the Scripture in its entirety. God expects His people today to love God supremely and to love others as we love ourselves.

**Bible Study Summary**

The man who approached Jesus was very affluent (Mark 10:22). According to the other Gospels, he was a young official, possibly the head of his local synagogue (Matt. 19:20; Luke 18:18). By most standards he was extremely successful. In a society that venerated the oldest men, he was a leader while still in his youth. In a region that abounded with poverty, he acquired great riches. The man’s intellectual ability, his position and status, and his material possessions failed to satisfy his real need in life. He apparently recognized that even his devout lifestyle could not bring him into a right relationship with God. He sought some required deed over and above what he already was doing. He failed to comprehend that faith alone makes one right with God, not some deed (or even many deeds).

Many people trust in wealth to provide for their needs. The ability to use wealth to purchase material things gives a false sense of security. In reality God alone can provide what people require. Using wealth to help others shows it does not have priority in our lives and shows our love for others (Mark 10:22-25). Zacchaeus (see previous session) realized that a personal relationship with Jesus was more valuable than money. The rich young man failed to see this reality.

Jesus declared that all the Old Testament can be understood in terms of loving God and loving humanity. If one loves God supremely, that person will obey the Commandments pertaining to dedication, worship, and service. If one loves people, that individual will conform to the Commandments that govern relationships with others.
Trek 5: Questions to Consider

1. Do I love God supremely and love others as I love myself? How do I show that?

2. Do I count on living by the Ten Commandments or other rules as a means of receiving eternal life? If so, why do I think or act this way?

3. Do I use the wealth God has given me to help others? How am I doing that right now?

4. Do I give wealth too much priority in my life? What am I doing that shows I value wealth too much?

5. What can I do to be content and focus my priorities away from possessions in a materialistic society?

6. Do I give God priority in my life? How do I demonstrate that right now?

7. Have I put my faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord? Am I holding anything back from Him?
Trek 5: Case Study

**A Starving Success!**

Lights . . . balloons . . . confetti . . . surprise . . . and strains of a “Happy Birthday” song. Everyone on the hall was celebrating. And one person was starving!

Surprised and overwhelmed by the outpouring of warm-natured, fun-filled attention from her friends and colleagues, Cindy had almost forgotten this was her big four-zero! The party was being thrown in the offices of the State Board of Education, where she was deputy director—no small feat for a small-town girl.

Cindy was stereotypical of her generation. As a youngster in the 60s, she had grown up with high ideals and was issue driven. As an adolescent in the 70s, she learned to spread her wings, distrust the establishment, and succeed. As a young adult of the 80s, she pursued education, set personal goals, and stuck by her plan. And now, celebrating her 40th birthday, she could reflect on all that these things had gained her.

As a young child, Cindy dreamed of achieving position and influence when she became an adult. Her mom chose to marry early and dropped out of high school. She had no regrets but encouraged Cindy to aim higher. By the time Cindy was a teenager, she had served in several roles in various student organizations at her schools, had participated in junior community organizations, and had served in leadership roles at church as well. Yet she starved for more.

Academics came easy for Cindy. She applied herself to her studies and graduated as the valedictorian of her high school class. At a state university Cindy was an honor student and she chose to major in education. She had been influenced favorably by her teachers and wanted to have a similar impact on future students.

Graduating at the top of her college class, Cindy was employed quickly at one of the larger junior high schools in the state. Her passion for education and for the students made her a favorite among administrators, colleagues, students, and parents. In four short years, Cindy had volunteered in so many roles that she was the obvious choice for vice principal. One year of excellence in administration put her on the fast track to become vice principal at the city high school. At 28 years of age Cindy married a young lawyer, and they set out to begin their family. Career advancement, popularity, a loving husband, and a young child—but Cindy starved for more.

A Master of Education degree took almost three years because nights and summers were the only options available to Cindy. However, the 32-year-old wife and mother persisted and once again graduated with honors. The rewards were not only financial but positional as well. Population growth resulted in the opening of a brand new state-of-the-art high school, and Cindy was chosen to lead this venture into the new millennium. Now 35, in a fairy-tale-like marriage, with two beautiful daughters, and working as the highly visible principal of what was becoming the best known school in the state—but Cindy starved for more.

At 38, Cindy became the youngest deputy director of a state department in the administration. In only two years she had asserted herself through committees and had more influence with state legislators than the director. Now she was celebrating her 40th birthday. Surrounded by friends and admirers, positioning herself for the top post, popular...
enough to win any state office she might choose to seek, adored by her husband, respected by her kids, and still she starved for more.

Cindy was 40 years into a success-filled life. However, as she achieved ever-higher levels of professional success, she found that no amount was enough. Only a deeper vacuum developed. Each victory meant another hill to climb. Every week achieving excellence took more and more time, but she kept at it. The merry-go-round of success had been so much fun at first. But the ride wouldn’t end. And Cindy was starving!