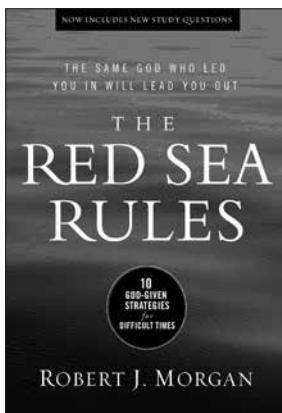
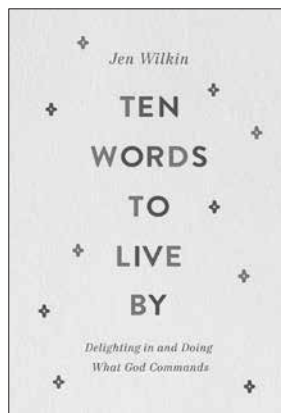

Books of Study

Further in-depth Bible studies by the authors presented this quarter in MasterWork® are available in their full-length books. To purchase your own copies to read and study, visit lifeway.com. Or you can order a copy by calling 1.800.458.2772.



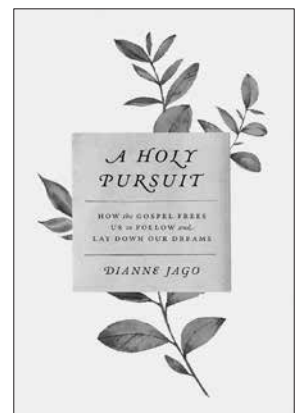
The Red Sea Rules
Robert J. Morgan

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Ten Words To Live By
Jen Wilkin

Crossway
ISBN: 9781433566349



A Holy Pursuit
Dianne Jago

B&H Publishing Group
ISBN: 9781535962353



The Red Sea Rules

ABOUT THE WRITERS

Robert J. Morgan wrote *The Red Sea Rules*. He is also Associate Pastor of World Outreach Church in Murfreesboro, TN and the leader of Robert J. Morgan Ministries. Rob was involved in pastoral ministry for over 40 years in Nashville, Tennessee. He is a best-selling writer of more than 35 books. He has three daughters and sixteen grandchildren.

Amy Summers wrote the personal activities and teaching plans for this study. She is a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Amy leads a women's Bible study at her church in Belmont, North Carolina. Together with her husband, Stephen, she enjoys leading a weekly small group, hiking and traveling, and spending time with their three adult children and three grandchildren.

Just think of it: the winds blew, the sea split, the waters congealed into towering walls, and the Israelites passed through dry-shod. This happened not for the entertainment value of the experience, but to prove to us in earth-shaking, history-making fashion that, even when we are most anxious and distressed, God will make a way when there seems to be no way.

Not long ago I was flying from Athens to New York, dealing with a problem that had reduced me to a bundle of nerves. Gazing down on the choppy Atlantic, I asked God for His help, then opened my Bible. The day's reading, as it happened, was Exodus 14. As I worked through the chapter, ten rules unfolded like rubber life rafts; ten ways of handling dilemmas and discouragements—a divine protocol for handling life when we find ourselves caught between the devil and the deep Red Sea.

Once home, I actively applied these principles to my problems. I found them then, as I've found them since, a powerful and effective strategy for coping with the messes and stresses of life.

These aren't ten quick-and-easy steps to instant solutions. In my case, it took quite a while to work through the anguish and achieve a positive result. However, I found that Exodus 14 provides a biblical method to process difficulties by faith, in the light of God's almighty presence, providence, promises, and power.

The Red Sea may roll before us; the desert may entrap us; the enemy may press on our heels. The past may seem implausible and the future impossible, but God works in ways we cannot see. He will make a way of escape for His weary, but waiting, children. The reality of the Red Sea, in a word, is this: God will always make a way for His tired, yet trusting, children, even if He must split the sea to do it.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: Difficult times are opportunities for spiritual growth, glorifying God, and remembering God has placed you where you are for a purpose.

Focus on this goal: God means for you to be where you are and be more concerned about His glory than your relief.

Key Bible Passage: Exodus 14:1-4

Before the Session

Write on two separate placards: *Red Sea Rule 1: Realize that God means for you to be where you are.* and *Red Sea Rule 2: Be more concerned for God's glory than for your relief.* **Display** the placards when instructed in Steps 3 and 6.

Obtain the lyrics to the hymn "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" by William Cowper (#664, The Baptist Hymnal 2008 ed) for Step 5.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Encourage the group to state common sayings that indicate a person is in a dilemma. (*Examples: between a rock and a hard place; in a lose/lose situation; between the devil and the deep blue sea.*) **Explore** what those sayings imply. (*Samples: there's no way out, no good choice.*)

State: *We have all experienced times when we felt like we had to choose between two bad options. But the truth is God's people always have good choices in hard situations.*

Use the Introduction to note this four-session study of *The Red Sea Rules* will examine ten rules, ten good choices, for "handling dilemmas and

discouragements...when we find ourselves caught between the devil and the deep Red Sea.”

STEP 2 - No Question Marks

Briefly summarize Reba’s story from Day One. Invite responses to Day One, activity 1.

Read and discuss the Day One paragraph that begins with “Some circumstances are beyond our control...”

Say: *The preacher John R. Rice said, “Worry is putting question marks where God has put periods.”*

Ask: *What do you think he meant by that?*

STEP 3 - Led In and Led Out

State when we are in pressure-filled situations we may feel it’s logical to worry. **Read** some of the “How can you not worry” questions from Day Two.

Ask: *How would you complete the question: How can I not worry when . . . ?*

Read the author’s question from Day Two: *How can you not worry when the Red Sea faces you, the desert surrounds you, and the soldiers of Egypt are speeding toward you with drawn swords?*

Declare the answer to that question is Red Sea Rule #1. **Display** the placard and read it aloud. **Discuss** Day Two, activity 1.

Ask: *What are our choices when God leads us to a difficult place?* Use Day Two remarks to describe how Reba made the right choice.

Discuss Day Two, activity 2 in a general, rather than specific, sense.

STEP 4 - Finding God in Difficult Places

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the first paragraph of Day Three.

Encourage participants to state why they agree or disagree with that statement and why. Relate Darlene’s story from Day Three, describing how her perspective changed.

Discuss Day Three, activity 1.

Ask: *Would you rather God make a way for you in an impossible situation, or just not allow you to be in that situation in the first place?* **Explain** your reasoning.

Discuss Day Three, activity 2.

STEP 5 - Purpose in Pain

Invite a volunteer to read the first paragraph of Day Four. **Discuss** Day Four, activity 1.

Ask: *Sometimes people use 1 Corinthians 10:13 to say that God won't give us more than we can bear. How does 2 Corinthians 1:8 say something different?*

Explain 1 Corinthians 10:13 is in the context of temptation; God won't allow us to be tempted to sin beyond what we can resist. However, God often brings us into situations we cannot handle on our own so we will solely rely on Him.

Read through at least the fourth verse of the hymn "God Moves in a Mysterious Way."

Evaluate how the phrase, "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain," can help believers make the right choice when they're tempted to ask God why?

Briefly relate the Andrew Murray illustration and read the quote in Day Four.

Discuss Day Four, activity 2.

STEP 6 - Mistakes To Miracles

Inquire: *Sometimes it's our own fault we find ourselves in tough situations; we weren't led there by God, but by our own sinfulness. What are some right choices we can make in those situations?*

Use the remarks under "Mistakes to Miracles" in Day Five to add to that discussion.

Ask: *What questions do our natural instincts compel us to ask when we find ourselves caught in a really difficult situation?*

Discuss Day Five, activity 1. **Display** the Red Sea Rule #2 placard and **read** it aloud. **Analyze** how that can create a new paradigm for dealing with tough situations. **Read** the last paragraph of Day Five.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Discuss Day Five, activity 2.

Encourage participants to make biblical choices this week and implement some of those applications to their own difficult situations.

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: Challenges may arise, but God uses these circumstances to draw us closer to Him and refine our faith.

Focus on this goal: Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on the Lord through prayer.

Key Bible Passage: Exodus 14:5-10

Before the Session

Write on two separate placards: *Red Sea Rule 3: Acknowledge your enemy but keep your eyes on the Lord.* and *Red Sea Rule 4: Pray!*

Display placards when directed in Step 1.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Lead a discussion with: *Do you like to drive at night? Why or why not? What are some challenges in nighttime driving? What is a good strategy for facing oncoming headlights when driving at night? (Note: According to driversed.com "If an approaching car is using its high-beams, don't look directly into the oncoming headlights—look toward the right edge of your lane. Watch the oncoming car out of the corner of your eye.")*

Say: *According to the Red Sea Rules, that's a good strategy for facing life's difficult circumstances as well.*

Display and read the placards for Red Sea Rules 3 and 4.

STEP 2 - Recognize The Enemy

Invite the group to identify key principles in waging successful warfare.

Highlight two principles: 1. Know who your enemy is. 2. Know how your enemy operates. **Invite** a volunteer to read Ephesians 6:11-12.

Evaluate how Paul addresses those two principles. **Explain** “wiles” (v. 11) can also be translated “tactics, schemes, tricks, craftiness.” These indicate Satan often works covertly. Other times, however, he attacks overtly as Pharaoh did.

Discuss Day One, activity 1. Guide the group to examine parallels between Pharaoh and Satan. Note that Charles Spurgeon said: “The great tyrant has not forgotten you, and he designs your capture and re-enslavement.”

Ask: *Why would Spurgeon say that—to scare us to death? Elaborate on your response.* **Explain:** *Satan may have designed our capture and re-enslavement, but God has designed our deliverance and liberation.* **Invite** a volunteer to read the last paragraph of Day One.

Discuss Day One, activity 2.

STEP 3 - Resist The Enemy

Say: *Our furious enemy has had the same goals and used the same tactics since the beginning of time.*

Discuss Day Two, activity 1. **Emphasize:** *Satan lies to get us to doubt God’s Word and character; he insinuates God is holding out on us and doesn’t have our best purpose in mind. He’s never changed those tactics because they work so well.*

Ask: *Why must we acknowledge Satan’s activity but not be intimidated by it?*

Invite volunteers to read the Scriptures quoted in Day Two. **Point out** that God wouldn’t tell us to resist Satan if He didn’t give us the power and resources to do so.

Discuss Day Two, activity 2. **Explore** what it might look like in daily life for believers to use those resources in resisting Satan.

STEP 4 - A Dog Called Satan

Ask: *Do you think believers are more likely to overestimate or underestimate Satan’s activities? Explain your reasoning.*

Ask: *What’s the danger of either response?*

Use Day Three to note activities Paul attributed to Satan in his letters.

Discuss Day Three, activity 1. **Request** adults identify from Day Three the number of times Paul referenced Jesus, Lord, or Christ and the number of times he mentioned Satan or devil.

Ask: *What take-away principle can we gain from that?* **Invite** someone to read the last paragraph of Day Three. **Discuss** Day Three, activity 2.

Examine why humility is essential in resisting Satan.

STEP 5 - From Fear To Prayer

Say: *Our willingness to humble ourselves before God determines whether we will face the enemy with panic or prayer.*

Discuss Day Four, activity 1. **Ask:** *When in crisis situations, what is always the better option—panic or prayer—and why? Then why do we often choose panic? What can we learn from the Israelites about what to do, and not do, in crisis situations?*

Read from Day Four that the Israelites' "seaside cry was urgent, united, unfeigned, but unbelieving."

Analyze the difference between a panicked prayer and a crisis-time prayer.

Discuss the second question of Day Four, activity 2.

STEP 6 - Piercing Grace

Guide the group to evaluate the power of united and unfeigned prayer. Discuss Day Five, activity 1.

Ask: *What are reasons we may struggle to pray expectantly? What are reasons we can pray expectantly?* **Read** aloud James 5:16. **Invite** volunteers to share how they have personally experienced the truth of that verse.

Read the last paragraph of Day Five. Discuss Day Five, activity 2.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

State: *Sometimes life feels like we're driving in the dark, blinded by all that's coming at us. When we focus on Satan, giving attention to his lies, we steer right toward him, and a crash is pretty likely. So, let's acknowledge our enemy but keep our eyes on the Lord through humble, earnest, expectant prayer, and He will keep us in the right lane.*

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: In times of struggle, stay calm and look for God's presence.

Focus on this goal: When you're unsure what to do next, take the next logical step by faith.

Key Bible Passage: Exodus 14:13-20

Before the Session

Write on three separate placards: *Red Sea Rule 5: Stay calm and confident, and give God time to work*, *Red Sea Rule 6: When unsure, just take the next logical step by faith*, and *Red Sea Rule 7: Envision God's enveloping presence*. **Display** placards when directed in Steps 2, 4, and 6.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Ask: *When you're in a threatening situation is your typical response fight, flight, or a paralyzing freeze?*

Explain: *The fight-or-flight response is an instinctive reaction that prepares the body to stay and deal with a threat or run away.*

Ask: *But what if we're stuck like the Israelites at the Red Sea when the threat is too powerful to fight and there's nowhere to run—what are our choices when we have no choices?* **Refer** to the third and fourth paragraphs of Day One.

Remind participants we can choose the Red Sea Rules. **Use** the placards displayed in Sessions 1 and 2 to review the first four rules. This session will explore three more Red Sea Rules.

STEP 2 - Calm and Confident in the Waiting

Say: *How we choose to respond to threatening situations determines whether we leave room for God to work.* **Discuss** Day One, activity 1. **Display** the Red Sea Rule 5 placard and **read** it aloud.

Ask: *Which of the instructions that Moses gave the people would have been most difficult for you to obey and why?* To add to the discussion of that question, refer to the Day One remarks about waiting on God and controlling one's emotions. **Determine** the truths about God Moses declared to the people in Exodus 14:13-14.

Examine how believing those truths would empower the people to follow Moses' instructions. Invite responses to Day One, activity 2.

STEP 3 - Trusting God in the Storm

Note the verses quoted in Day Two **provide** good reasons for remaining confident in fearful situations.

Request participants read aloud phrases from those printed verses that encourage them to stay calm and confident and give God time to work.

Discuss Day Two, activity 1. **Read** the Day Two, second paragraph that begins with "Many times we cannot."

Urge participants to silently consider Day Two, activity 2.

STEP 4 - Day By Day

Ask the group if they've ever looked at a daunting task, perhaps a big work project or a garage that needs cleaning, and thought, "I don't even know where to start"

Ask: *What encourages them to get started?*

State: *When we feel overwhelmed, we might encourage ourselves with sayings like, "When you don't know where to start, start somewhere," or "You eat an elephant one bite at a time."*

Say: *We can also encourage ourselves with Red Sea Rule 6.*

Display and **read** that placard **Declare** that's what God told the Israelites to do. **Discuss** Day Three, activity 1. **Relate** what C.H. Mackintosh believed about the parting of the Red Sea.

Invite volunteers to **read** the "day by day" verses printed in Day Three.

Analyze what all these verses imply about how God wants us to live.
Discuss Day Three, activity 2.

STEP 5 - Moment By Moment

State: *A missionary named Isobel Kuhn said, “I have found that if we go as far as we can, God often opens up the rest of the way.”*

Ask: *Have you found that to be true?*

Relate Isobel Kuhn’s story from Day Four, emphasizing her two decisions.

Explore how believers can decide to cast out fear. **Evaluate** what it might look like on a practical basis to “seek light for the next step.”

Discuss Day Four, activity 1. **Encourage** adults by reading the final short paragraph of Day Four.

Note: *Isobel Kuhn also said, “How it pays to take one step at a time with God!”* **Invite** volunteers to share how they have discovered that to be true.

STEP 6 - God’s Presence in Trials

Request a volunteer **read** Exodus 14:19-20. **Explain** the fire and cloud are a Christophany, an Old Testament appearance of God the Son, manifesting the Father’s presence.

Discuss Day Five, activity 1. **Read** the Day Five paragraph beginning with, “At the Red Sea...” **State:** *Day Five gives four suggestions for mastering the practice of the presence of God.* **Read** of the four suggestions aloud.

Discuss the first suggestion. **Explain** the second suggestion is Red Sea Rule 7. **Display** and **read** that placard. **Explore** how this rule is different than pretending or projecting.

Point out the psalms, such as Psalm 139, can help believers envision God’s enveloping presence.

Briefly discuss the last two suggestions from Day Five. Read the last paragraph of Day Five.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

State: *Living by the Red Sea Rules can empower us to respond to threatening situations differently than our typical response of fight, flight, or freeze.*

Discuss Day Five, activity 2.

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: Trust God to deliver in His own way, in His own time, and for His own glory.

Focus on this goal: Don't forget to praise God, no matter what your current circumstances are.

Key Bible Passage: Exodus 14:21-15:2

Before the Session

Write on three placards: *Red Sea Rule 8: Trust God to deliver in His own unique way. Red Sea Rule 9: View your current crisis as a faith builder for the future. and Red Sea Rule 10: Don't forget to praise Him.* **Display** placards when directed in Steps 2, 5, and 6.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Ask if anyone enjoys making or eating sugar cookies. (OPTION: Display a variety of cookie cutters.) **Ask:** *What are your favorite cookie cutter shapes?*

Guide the group to examine what the writer might mean with his statement, "there are no cookie cutters in heaven" from Day One.

Declare: *God doesn't make cookie cutter people, give standardized tests, or provide one-size-fits-all solutions. All God is and does is unique. The Red Sea Rules help us know how to respond faithfully to our unique God, as we face our unique trials.*

STEP 2 - God's Unique Deliverance

Discuss Day One, activity 1. **Request** participants scan the verses printed in Day One and **identify** what God works in His unique way to do.

Lead the group to determine some typical “how” questions people ask when in a difficult situation (samples: how am I going to fix this, endure this, get out of this). **Invite** someone to read 2 Peter 2:9.

State: *We often don't know how to deliver ourselves from trouble, but God does. That leads us to Red Sea Rule 8.*

Display and **read** that placard. **Analyze** why it is often hard to live by that rule. **Discuss** Day One, activity 2.

STEP 3 - His Providential Ways

Assert that God's higher ways compel us to trust His promises and providence.

Read the second paragraph of Day Two. **Invite** volunteers to share a time God's unseen hand providentially ordered their circumstances.

STEP 4 - Trusting Him

Discuss Day Three, activity 1. **Read** the first paragraph of Day Three.

Discuss Day Three, activity 2. **Note** the evangelist Vance Havner said, “God marks across some of our days, ‘Will explain later.’”

Point out Havner said, “some,” not “all” of our days.

State: *God is not obligated to explain Himself to us. We might not ever know His specific reasons for our pain.*

Ask: *But in the end will that matter?* **Discuss.**

Declare: *Our task is not to know the “how” or “why” but to trust God to deliver in His own unique way.*

STEP 5 - Stronger Through Struggle

State: *Red Sea Rule 9 is also our task.* **Display** and **read** that placard.

Discuss Day Four, activity 1.

Declare: *The Israelites' crisis and God's deliverance at the Red Sea beefed up their faith for the challenges that lay ahead of them.*

Guide the group to define faith, using Day Four. **Read** the second paragraph that begins with “Faith has a cumulative quality.” **Analyze** what determines whether a person's faith falters or grows stronger in trials.

State: *The psalmist Asaph demonstrates how to respond to trials in a faith-building way.*

Request a volunteer read Psalm 77:1-9.

Determine Asaph's situation and state of mind. **Invite** someone to read Psalm 77:10-20. **Evaluate** what grew Asaph's faith.

Declare: *Faith grows when we remember God's providence, promises, and previous acts of deliverance.*

Ask: *How can remembering the deliverance Christ gained for us on the cross help our faith grow in any crisis situation?*

Invite responses to Day Four, activity 2.

STEP 6 - Perspective of Praise

Discuss Day Five, activity 1.

Display and **read** the Red Sea Rule 10 placard. **Consider** why it is so essential that we remember to praise God when He has worked deliverance in our lives.

Say: *The writer says, "praise and worship are the sand and cement that hold the bricks in place along life's daily pathway."*

Ask: *What do you think he means by that? How can every part of our day be encased in praise?*

Point out the writer's suggestions from Day Five.

Invite a volunteer to read Colossians 3:1-3. **Evaluate** how this passage explains how to develop a perspective of praise.

Declare: *When we see things from God's point of view praise is our natural response. We express joyful, confident thanksgiving for all God has done, is doing, and is going to do because we trust Him to deliver in His own way, in His own time, and for His own glory.*

Read the final paragraph of Day Five, beginning with "So whether you are..." and **discuss** the importance of praising God during any circumstance.

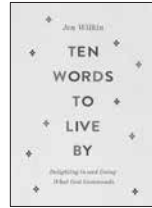
STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

As time permits, **review** all ten of the Red Sea Rules.

Ask: *How have you applied these principles to your problems in the past weeks and what difference has that made in your attitudes, actions, and relationships?*

Close in prayer.

Ten Words To Live By



ABOUT THE WRITERS

Jen Wilkin wrote *Ten Words To Live By*. She is an author and Bible teacher from Dallas, Texas. Jen has organized and led studies for women in home, church, and parachurch contexts. An advocate for Bible literacy, her passion is to see others become articulate and committed followers of Christ, with a clear understanding of why they believe what they believe, grounded in the Word of God.

Leslie Hudson wrote the personal learning activities and teaching plans for this study. Leslie enjoys the quiet life in White Bluff, Tennessee with her family and dogs. She loves strong coffee, cool mornings, and people who get excited about the Bible. She is active in the youth, women, and music ministry at First Baptist Church in Dickson, Tennessee.

This is a book about the law of God in all of its life-giving beauty. In the church today there exists a great forgetfulness about the role of the law in the life of the believer. This book is an exercise in remembrance. Far back in the earliest pages of the Old Testament, in Exodus 20 and then again in Deuteronomy 5, an ancient people in a distant land were given the *aseret hade-varim*, the Ten Words. What the Torah and the rabbis called the Ten Words, you and I know as the Ten Commandments. Given to Moses on Mount Sinai, inscribed on tablets of stone by the very finger of God.

The Ten Commandments are perhaps the best-known example of moral law, informing law codes into modern times. Though most people know about the Ten Words, few can actually enumerate them. While Americans struggled to recall the Ten Commandments, they could name the seven ingredients of a Big Mac with relative ease. Not many Christians are able to name the Decalogue's ten "key ingredients," either. When the Ten Commandments are not forgotten, they are often wrongly perceived. They suffer from a PR problem. They are seen by many as the obsolete utterances of a thunderous, grumpy God to a disobedient people, neither of whom seem very relatable or likable. Because we have trouble seeing any beauty in the Ten Words, forgetting them comes easily.

The Ten Words graciously position us to live at peace with God and others. The Great Commandment is the underlying principle for all right living. The Ten Words are encouraging words, meant to give us hope—hope that we will live rightly oriented to God and others, hope that we will grow in holiness. They are not given to discourage but to delight. They are no less than words of life.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: There is one God and He alone is to be worshiped.

Focus on this goal: Show honor to God with your undivided allegiance and undiminished worship.

Key Bible Passage: Exodus 20:1-6

Before the Session

On a board, **write** “Only One.....” You’ll use this as a discussion prompt for Step 1.

Read and be comfortable telling Exodus 32 in your own words You’ll do that in Step 5.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Point to the board with the “Only One . . .” prompt.

Say: *I’d like to start today’s discussion by considering some things of which there are only one. It may be sentimental (“I have only one piece of my mother’s China”), geographic (“There’s only one Grand Canyon”) or even lighthearted (“There’s only one way to skin a cat.”)*

Draw the discussion to a close by considering how we handle things of which there are “only one”

Say: *In today’s passage, let’s consider how significantly we should treat the only one God Almighty.*

STEP 2 - Only One God

Read aloud the following quote from the Introduction of *Ten Words to Live By*: *Christianity is about relationship with God and others, and because this statement is true, Christianity is also unapologetically about rules, for rules show us how to live in those relationships. Rather than threaten relationship, rules enable it.*

Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 20:1-3 and recount the events of Exodus 1—19.

Explain that God had revealed Himself as the only God through the plagues and crossing of the Red Sea.

Use Day One to point out details about the pantheism of the people of both Canaan and Egypt.

Point out that this first command would be a shocking announcement to the people of 1400 BC.

STEP 3 - Restoring Single-Minded Worship

Read aloud (or summarize) the opening paragraph of Day Two, pointing out that God's perfect world included perfect, single-minded worship of Him alone.

Invite a volunteer to read Revelation 21:18-23 aloud, revealing that the last chapter of the Bible reveals the same setting: a perfect world with single-minded worship of Him alone.

Use Day Two to help reveal from the Revelation 21 passage that all the lofty things of earth (gold, jewels, etc.) become commonplace in the New Jerusalem because God alone will receive our worship; our job today is to understand and practice this God-alone worship.

STEP 4 - The Danger of Idolatry

Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 20:4-6 aloud.

Read aloud the second paragraph from Day Three, helping learners to understand the focus of the command: God's glory.

Use Day Three to reveal the "image management" of FDR and Queen Elizabeth.

Briefly share a time in your own life when you attempted to manage your own image in some way.

Explain: *Because we are confirmed to an earth-bound existence, our brains and hearts cannot fully comprehend who He is: omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and more. So, any image we can possibly create will inevitably fall short of who He really is.*

STEP 5 - Worshiping a Lie

Connect the first two commandments by reading aloud the opening paragraph of Day Four.

Recount the story of the golden calf found in Exodus 32, pointing out that this scene happened as Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments.

Use Day Four, particularly the eight lines of contrast, to point out how the golden calf seemed to be Aaron's rendition of Yahweh, but it falls far short of who He really is.

Challenge learners to understand this is the reason for God's second command: we literally cannot create an image that reveals Him.

STEP 6 - True Worship

Invite a volunteer to read John 17:17 and 2 Timothy 2:15, stressing the importance of diligently reading, understanding, and believing the Bible.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the opening paragraph of Day Five, and challenge learners to recommit to a consistent, focused time of Bible study.

Point out that Christ is also the perfect representation of God (Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:1-3, John 1:18), and that by walking as Jesus walked, we live truth, applying it to our lives.

Use Day Five to help learners grasp that we cannot make idolatrous representations of God, but that He has chosen us to be His physical representations to an unbelieving world.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Read 1 John 5:20 aloud, pointing out that we can only obey the first and second commands of God through faith and trust in His Son. As a group, commit to reading Exodus 20:1-6 every morning this week.

Challenge learners to carefully consider their own tendency to worship things other than God, or to worship a lesser version of God, as they review these verses.

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: God's name and His Sabbath should be kept as holy.

Focus on this goal: Show your love for God by keeping His name untarnished and His worship unhindered.

Key Bible Passage: Exodus 20:7-11

Before the Session

Before learners arrive, **write** "Holy" on the board. You'll use this prompt in Step 1.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

As learners arrive, **direct** their attention to the word "holy" on the board. Get the discussion centered around this word.

Ask: *What are some phrases that use this word? (Holy cow, holy roller). What do most people in society think this word means? What do you understand its meaning to be? Do we still have holy items in us world today?*

Consider a memory from your childhood in which some item was special, set apart, and not intended for common use. This may be a special serving platter, a set of dishes, or perhaps even a classic car.

Say: *In today's passage, we're going to see how God's name and His Sabbath are to be holy and what that means for us.*

STEP 2 - The Weight of God's Name

Invite a few volunteers to **read** Exodus 20:7 aloud from a variety of translations, making note of the different ways these ancient words are represented in our language. Invite a few volunteers to briefly explain what their names mean and whether or not their lives (character, actions, etc..) accurately represent their names.

Read the third paragraph from Day One that begins with the phrase "So what does the Bible mean" aloud.

Explain that there are four ways to misuse God's name and character: with inconsistency, misattribution, lip service, and informality.

Read Leviticus 19:12 and use Day One to point out the importance of speaking always with integrity, representing a true and faithful God.

STEP 3 - The Sin of Misattribution

Explain that in the second misuse of God's name, misattribution, has two different elements. The first is summarized in the phrase "God said."

Read the last paragraph from Day Two that begins "But aggressions against the reputation of God" aloud. If applicable, share a time in your own life when you actually used one of these "God said"-type of excuses for your own agenda.

Say: *In using God's name appropriately, we must be careful not to give His rubber stamp to our own plans or choices.*

Explain that the second type of misattribution is blaming God, painting ourselves as a victim to His sovereignty. Summarize Genesis 50, the story of Joseph and his brothers, and **read** v.20 aloud to reveal the right reverence for God's plan.

STEP 4 - The Sin of Lip Service

Invite a volunteer to **read** Isaiah 29:13 aloud, pointing out that these words are quoted by Jesus in Matthew 15:8-9.

Draw a parallel between this verse and what is called "The Sin of Lip Service" from Day Three.

Read aloud the opening paragraph of Day Three and say, "Let's approach this honestly: we're all guilty here."

Read Luke 6:46 aloud, stressing that calling Jesus Lord must be confirmed with a life that reveals it.

Use the last paragraph from Day Three to reveal the issue is not with our words but with our hearts.

STEP 5 - The Sin of Informality

Briefly recount our author's summary of the scene from the movie *The American President* in Day Four. (Or, if you have a personal story detailing a formal title, share that instead.)

Engage learners in discussing the impact of using an appropriately formal name for a person of influence.

Invite a volunteer to **read** Matthew 6:9-13 aloud and use the Day Four commentary to **point out** Jesus's example of addressing God's name with holy reverence.

Invite a volunteer to **read** Philippians 2:9-11 aloud and **ask**: *What does this tell us about the eternal reverence of Christ's name? How should that impact our use of it today?*

STEP 6 - Remembering The Sabbath

Invite a volunteer to **read** Exodus 20:8-11 aloud.

Say: *We've considered carefully that we should treat God's name with holy reverence. Let's look at His command for holy reverence of the Sabbath.*

Read the first two paragraphs from Day Five to point learners back to God's plan for humanity in the Garden of Eden. Then skip down to the question, "Is all rest Sabbath rest" further in Day Five. As a group, consider how we have perhaps misconstrued the intended meaning of Sabbath.

Using the paragraph with the heading "Light in the Darkness" from Day Five, help learners apply the command for the Sabbath as a reflection of God rather than ourselves.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Say: *The prayer Jesus modeled for His disciples just a few moments ago; let's focus on another phrase from it: On earth as it is in heaven.*

Read aloud the last two paragraphs from Day Five and point out that our observance of the third and fourth commands reveal that we believe in, look forward to, and yearn for God's perfect kingdom.

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: God commands that you honor elders and honor life.

Focus on this goal: Show your love for God by honoring elders and honoring life.

Key Bible Passage: Exodus 20:12-13

Before the Session

Before learners arrive, **write** the word “honor” on the board. You’ll use this prompt in Steps 1 and 7.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Point to the word “honor” on the board.

Say: *We don’t really use this word in our culture much. But what did this word mean in generations past?*

Point out that the phrases “guest of honor,” “no honor among thieves,” and “It would be my honor” are still used today.

As a group, using all you’ve discussed (as well as an online dictionary, if you want), begin a working definition of “honor.”

Point out that Strong’s Dictionary defines the root word as “heavy” or “weighty;” how does that information give insight into your group definition.

STEP 2 - The Call to Honor God and Parents

Invite a volunteer to **read** Exodus 20:12 aloud.

Use the opening paragraphs of Day One to reveal that, though this is the first time the word “honor” appears in Exodus 20, it’s the inherent emphasis of all of the previous commands.

Invite a volunteer to **read** Mark 12:30-31 aloud.

Invite him or her to **read** it again, replacing the word “love” with the word “honor.”

As a group, **consider** how loving others and honoring them should go hand in hand.

Ask: *Can we honor someone without loving them?*

Use Day One to point out that this commandment is not primarily for children, but for adults.

STEP 3 - At Least I Haven’t Done That

Share a personal story in which you enjoyed a reality program (or some other form of entertainment) because it allowed you to admit, “Well, at least I haven’t done that.” If you don’t have that background, briefly overview our author’s story in the opening three paragraphs of Day Two.

Invite a volunteer to **read** Exodus 20:13 aloud.

Ask: *Why do you think this command is located at this precise spot in the commandment list?*

Point out that the first four commands dealt with how we treat God, the fifth is how we treat our elders, and from here until the end the commands refer to how we treat all other people.

STEP 4 - Siblings and Image Bearers

Invite a volunteer to **read** Genesis 4:1-9 aloud.

Say: *Even before the Ten Commandments were given, murder was against God’s will.* As a group, carefully consider the question, “Is anger a sin?”

Use Day Three that asks the same. **Read** Ephesians 4:26 aloud, pointing out that Paul’s instruction makes it clear that we can be angry without sinning, but few of us successfully are.

Read aloud the following line from Day Three: “Cain’s problem was not mere anger, but anger nursed, anger indulged, anger gratified.”

Consider the truth of the statement and how we, as Christ's followers, can stop thinking, "At least I haven't done that" from Day Three and start thinking, "How does my reaction to this anger honor Christ and others?"

STEP 5 - Beyond "Not Murdering"

Invite a volunteer to **read** Matthew 5:21-22. Go back to the beginning of Matthew 5 and briefly describe what was going on in this chapter. (Jesus is teaching the Sermon on the Mount.)

Use the second paragraph from Day Four that begins "Jesus does not overturn."

As a group, **consider** the devolving actions (anger, insults, name-calling) and how they progress to hatred intense enough to murder.

STEP 6 - From Contempt to Compassion

Read aloud the opening paragraph from Day Five and point to the fact that many people are angry and do nothing to quench it.

Say: *We may justify our anger in politics, traffic, obeying laws, and other areas because we feel we are right, and others are wrong. But in doing so, we degrade their value as God's image-bearers.*

Open your Bible and **read** Genesis 4:9 aloud.

Read aloud the first paragraph from Day Five that begins, "Contempt may win followers," imploring your fellow learners (and yourself) to treat one another as Christ demonstrated.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Invite a volunteer to **read** the last three paragraphs of Day Five aloud or instruct learners to **read** it silently.

Direct attentions back to the definition of "honor" they created in Step 1.

Ask: *Did we really grasp the right meaning when we started this lesson?*

You may want to reword the definition to include who deserves honor and how we can do more than the bare minimum of honoring our parents and others.

Close with prayer. **Ask** the Lord to help you, collectively and individually, to truly honor one another.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: God commands that you Honor marriage and honor property.

Focus on this goal: Show your love for God by honoring marriage and honoring property.

Key Bible Passage: Exodus 20:14-15

Before the Session

On a board, **draw** a “No Trespassing” sign. (*Search for a sample online if you don’t know what it looks like.*) You’ll use this in Step 1.

Read and be ready to summarize Genesis 25:19-34 and 26:1-40. You’ll recount the story in Step Five.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Point to the “No Trespassing” sign you drew on the board.

Ask: *Is this a sign everyone in this room has seen? Is there any question as to what this sign means when you see it?* Go a little overboard pointing out that the sign is common and clear.

Ask: *Now, let’s be honest; has anyone ever gone into an area that’s clearly marked with this sign? Why did you decide to disobey it?* Continue the line of thought **asking:** *What are the risks you take when ignoring this sign?*

Explain: *In today’s passage, we’re going to look at some of the clearest instructions in the Bible. And yet, disobedience of these two commands is, sadly, common.*

STEP 2 - Honoring Marriage

Invite a volunteer to **read** Exodus 20:14 aloud.

Point out that this command, like the “No Trespassing” sign, is clearly communicated and easily understood; yet many people (both in church and out) can point to how an adulterous relationship has affected their lives.

Emphasize: Marriage is the foundational relationship in the home from which all others proceed, and to which all others look for identity and stability.

Ask: *How might functional marriages build functional homes?* Discuss.

Ask: *What are some ways that functional marriages help a community thrive?*
Allow time to discuss.

Read aloud the last paragraph of Day One, stressing how “seeing” can lead to off-limits consuming.

STEP 3 - Desire Disordered

Use the opening of Day Two to point out the vast difference between sex inside of marriage and outside of marriage, contrasting vulnerability and commitment with contempt and consuming.

Invite a volunteer to **read** Colossians 3:5 aloud.

Use Day Two to follow our author’s biblical logic to see that it is God’s Word that is the knife we use to “put to death” (Col. 3:5) the lustful part of our heart, which leads the other members to dwell in that lust.

Emphasize: *As we confess and repent, God puts to death our disordered desires and gives us rightly ordered ones.*

STEP 4 - Healthy Desire

Read aloud the opening two paragraphs of Day Three, explaining that this is a continuation of the discussion from Step Three, that we must each submit our hearts to the sin-eliminating knife of Scripture.

Say: *We can set up all kinds of boundaries to keep ourselves and others from committing adultery, but that will not solve the root problem in the heart.*

Read Psalm 37:4 aloud.

Ask: *How do we get to the point that we delight in God’s law?*

Invite a volunteer to **read** the last paragraph of Day Three that begins “We should not commit adultery.”

Discuss your group’s involvement in taking a stand.

STEP 5 - Lessons in Theft

Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 20:15 aloud.

Point back to the “No Trespassing” sign on the board.

Say: *Again, like the sign, this command is clearly communicated and easily understood. And yet many people have a story like our author.*

Read aloud the first two paragraphs of Day Four.

Briefly summarize the story of how Jacob stole Esau’s birthright and blessing in Genesis 25:19-34 and 27:1-40.

Ask: *What does Jacob’s thievery reveal about his heart?*

Use Day Four to reveal Jacob was stealing the very thing God had promised would be his, revealing a lack of trust in God and his parents.

STEP 6 - What We Steal

Read aloud the opening two paragraphs of Day Five.

Briefly overview the items that many people steal with no sense of regret: supplies (or finances) from their employer and items from hotel rooms.

Ask: *Regardless of how guilty you maybe of these things, does God make any kind of exception or caveat for this eighth command?*

As a group, **consider** how you can turn your personal, lived-out explanation of Exodus 20:15 into one that represents God’s intent.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Invite volunteers to turn to Ephesians 1 in their Bibles.

Say: *Let’s admit that none of us is completely guilt free from lust or taking. But let’s consider carefully all that Jesus has given us.*

Read verses 3-14 aloud, slowly and intentionally.

Invite learners to close their eyes and spend time reflecting on our over-abundant, grace-filled, thrillingly loving God.

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: God commands that we honor character and honor integrity.

Focus on this goal: Show your love of God by honoring character and honoring integrity.

Key Bible Passage: Exodus 20:16-17

Before the Session

Write *Why did God give His Ten Commandments?* on the board. You'll use this prompt in Step One.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Point to the question on the board.

Say: *We've spent the past month studying the Ten Commandments in detail; they are the foundation for God's Law. But what was His purpose in giving them?*

Engage learners in sharing different reasons, and help them to include that they reveal His holiness and standards.

Say: *As we wrap up this study with the final two commands, let's pay specific attention to this question and make sure we don't miss the answer.*

Open with prayer, inviting God to help us clearly see how we honor the reputation and hearts of others.

STEP 2 - Truthful Speech

Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 20:16 aloud and explain that the word translated “false testimony” speaks specifically to a lie about another person.

Ask: *What are some phrases we might hear or say when someone’s about to bear false witness?” (Answers may include, “Don’t say anything, but.” or “I don’t know if this is true, but I heard...”)*

Read aloud the last paragraph from Day One that begins “As the third word bade us” from Day One and lead learners to consider how this ninth command piggybacks upon several of the other commands in this Exodus 20 list.

STEP 3 - The Dangers of Reviling, Flattery, and Silence

Invite a volunteer to look up a definition of the verb “revile” and **read** Proverbs 12:18 aloud as an illustration.

Use the synonyms (and closely related words) in the first paragraph from Day Two to create a solid definition and to stress because it’s harmful and hurtful, pointing to how it appears in online vitriol, sarcasm, and shame so commonly that even believers don’t consider to be particularly sinful.

As a group, **consider** how our author also notes the sin of flattery as a way to manipulate or earn favor. To pivot to the sin of silence, use Day Two to point out that we are often told to hold our peace when speaking may inflame; however, there is also a time to speak (Eccl.3:7).

Invite a volunteer to **read** 2 Timothy 4:1-5,17 aloud. **Guide** learners to consider that silence is not always golden. **Say:** *Sometimes, we must speak up for others and truth.*

Read aloud the last paragraph of Day Two to give guidance in situations where we’re not certain if we should remain silent or speak.

STEP 4 - The Sin of Misattribution

Use Day Three to briefly define the “Sin of Misattribution” as taking credit or doling out blame that is undeserved, reminding learners that you considered this sin when discussing the third command.

Read from Day Three and **explain:** *We bear false witness through misattribution when we take credit for someone else’s work or give blame that we should accept for ourselves.*

Invite a volunteer to **read** Psalm 51:1 as an example of not casting blame on another and 1 Thessalonians 1:3 as recognizing the praise of others.

STEP 5 - From Covetousness to Contentment

Invite a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 20:17 and use the opening paragraph from Day Four to point out that this is the only item in the list of Ten Commandments that can't be observed by others.

Read aloud the second paragraph from Day Four and then read aloud James 1:14-15. **Share** a time in your own life when your desire for an item, a promotion, an upgrade, or something similar caused you to treat others with contempt or disregard the commands of God.

As a group, **consider** how the command “do not covet” can be stated conversely as “be content,” using Philippians 4:10-13 as a starting point.

STEP 6 - Breaking the Chains of Comparison

Invite a volunteer to **read** aloud the opening two paragraphs of Day Five.

Say: *We may not say it aloud, but most everyone has a thought that we would be happy if we could have our ideal situation. But that's not faith; that's actually idolatry.*

Help learners recognize that living according to God's will means trusting Him for every element of life and not hanging our hopes and dreams on an ideal that is at best unrealistic and at worst faith-quenching.

Read aloud Luke 12:15 using the first paragraph of Day Five. **Explain** Jesus's command.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Remind learners of the question you posed in Step One: *Why did God give the Ten Commandments?*

Invite learners to turn to 1 John 5 in their Bibles and ask someone to read vv. 1-4 aloud. **Point out** that we love God by knowing and obeying His commandments (see v. 3).

Stress that we yield to God, revealing our love for Him, each time we choose to listen and obey His standards.

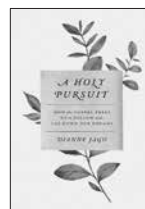
Read aloud Psalm 1:2.

Ask: *How will you delight in the law of the Lord in thought, word, and action?*

Discuss practical ways that the group will go forward from this study delighting in and living by the Ten Commandments.

Close in prayer.

A Holy Pursuit



Whether written by a hopeful atheist or an evangelical Christian, we find these messages everywhere: *If your dream doesn't scare you, you're not dreaming big enough . . . Never give up on something you can't go a day without thinking about . . . The cost of not following your heart is spending the rest of your life wishing you had.*

It's no surprise we experience growing discontent, wondering if we too should be chasing after our dreams. And so, we chase wildly after our dream because if we have a deep longing, God must want us to pursue it.

What happens when our dreams don't turn out as expected? Where the world says to go chase a passion no matter the cost, some of us assume that the godly alternative is to simply deny our passions altogether.

So how do we know if we should pursue a dream? Are we dreaming too big? Are we dreaming too small? The questions we should be asking are: What is the biblical approach to dreaming and how do we know if our dream is in God's will?

While there is not a one-size-fits-all answer to this, there's one thing we can be sure of in this dream-chasing world: Scripture does provide trustworthy wisdom to help the Christian navigate when to move forward or not.

A Holy Pursuit aims to remind you of who you are in Christ first and then to encourage you to use the truth and hope of the gospel as a lens when pursuing a dream.

God knows the desires of our hearts because God is the One who created us. He knows us intimately and is well aware of that dream or idea impressed on your heart right now, but His ultimate desire is for His people to love Him wholeheartedly, obey His commands, and seek after His will. Dive into Scripture alongside me as we consider the biblical approach to dreaming.

ABOUT THE WRITERS

Dianne Jago wrote *A Holy Pursuit*. She is a follower of Christ, saved by His grace alone and devoted to serving Him in all she does. Together with her husband, Ethan, they have three amazing children in the sunny shores of Panama City Beach, Florida. Ethan serves as lead pastor of 5 Bridges Church.

Leslie Hudson wrote the personal learning activities and teaching plans for this study. Leslie enjoys the quiet life in White Bluff, Tennessee with her family and dogs. She loves strong coffee, cool mornings, and people who get excited about the Bible. She is active in the youth, women's, and music ministry at First Baptist Church in Dickson, Tennessee.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: Worldly thinking contradicts biblical principles and leads you away from purpose and fulfillment in God.

Focus on this goal: You are called to remain distinct from worldly thought and prioritize your relationship with God above personal ambitions or dreams.

Key Bible Passage: Romans 12:2

Before the Session

Draw an empty thought bubble (like you see in a comic strip) on the board. You'll use this in Step 1.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Direct learners' attentions to the thought bubble on the board.

Explain that this new book, *A Holy Pursuit* by Dianne Jago, leads learners to examine their way of thinking.

Say: *Let's just practice a bit before we get into the text. Will a few volunteers share what you were thinking about this morning?* As learners offer those answers, write a synopsis in the thought bubble.

Ask: *What were some thoughts you had yesterday? How about in the past month?* Continue to **write** these ideas in the bubble.

Open with prayer, **asking** the Lord to help us understand how to glorify God with our thinking as we consider our futures.

STEP 2 - Divided Mind

Open with a brief discussion to define “worldview” using the opening paragraphs of the Day One.

Invite a volunteer to **read** Romans 12:2 aloud.

Ask: *What are the commands in this verse? What happens if we do that, according to the verse?*

Ask: *Has anyone never read or heard Romans 12:2 before? Establish that most believers recognize the passage.*

Ask: *How well do we, as believers, do at obeying these commands?*

Invite a volunteer to read Ephesians 6:11-12 and briefly overview the questions of Satan in Genesis 3.

Use the three numbered headings from the Day One to point to Satan’s attacks against God.

STEP 3 - Lies the World Believes

Instruct learners to glance through the three common phrases of worldly wisdom found in Day Two (numbered one through three).

Say: *These may not sound bad on the surface, but let’s consider if they contradict God’s Word.* **Read** aloud Jeremiah 17:9 and engage learners in considering how this verse stands against “Follow your heart” from Day Two.

Enlist a volunteer to **read** aloud the headings in the book of Ecclesiastes, chapters 1—4.

Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 aloud. **Ask:** *Does this sound in agreement with ‘chase your dreams?’* Lastly, **read** Colossians 3:23-24.

Invite volunteers to consider how those verses challenge “Go make a difference in this world” from Day Four.

STEP 4 - Lies the Christian Believes

Say: *Continuing with our worldly-wise phrases that do not line up with God’s Word, let’s look at two more lies. These are statements that reflect worldly wisdom that some Christians believe.*

Invite a volunteer to **read** Mark 12:30-31 and then **read** the first statement from the Day Three: “We can walk in freedom when we figure out God’s purpose for our lives.”

Invite a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 aloud, stressing that we may be perfectly in God's will and experience hardship.

Read Matthew 6:33 and Mark 1:15, followed by the second statement from Day Three. **Guide** learners to consider the conflict between the statement and the Bible.

STEP 5 - Guarding Our Minds

Invite all volunteers to open their Bibles to Psalm 119. **Read** aloud the John Piper quote, from Day Four along with the paragraph that follows.

Share a time in your own life when you found yourself watching or reading something that was totally void of Biblical wisdom and didn't realize it; stress the sneakiness of ungodly entertainment. **Invite** a learner to read the first eight verses of Psalm 119

Ask: *What does the author of this Psalm believe about God's Word?* **Stress** that following God's commands makes us happy, guards against sin, and requires God's help.

STEP 6 - When Dreaming Meets Idolatry

Say: *As we've seen this week, this is a solemn topic for our consideration: are we yielded to God or do we expect Him to yield to us?*

Read aloud the second paragraph from Day Five. **Ask:** *Has anyone in here ever had a plan that didn't go your way? (Wait for a show of hands.)*

Ask: *How did God use that turn of events to draw you closer to Him?*

Read Proverbs 16:9. **Say:** *When we cling to our dreams more tightly than we cling to the truth that God is Lord Almighty, we've got an idol problem.*

Read Psalm 37:4. **Ask:** *What is the instruction in this verse? How do we obey?*

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Explain: *This study, over the next four weeks, will not only reveal our dreams but whether or not God is Lord of our lives.*

Read aloud starting with the sentence after the Spurgeon quote through the last paragraph from Day Five.

Challenge learners to dwell on 2 Corinthians 13:5, testing and examining themselves to carefully consider that Jesus is Savior and Lord.

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: Gospel transformation means surrendering your dreams and ambitions to God's will for true fulfillment and purpose.

Focus on this goal: Freedom and identity are found not in our dreams or ambitions but in our relationship with Christ.

Key Bible Passage: Luke 9:23-24

Before the Session

Sketch a drawing of a person holding a flag. You'll use this in Step One.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

As learners arrive, **ask** them to speculate on what the stick person in your drawing on the board is doing.

After a few guesses, **point** to the flag and **ask:** *What if I told you that this was a white flag? (Most learners will know that a white flag typically indicates "surrender.")*

Ask: *When you think of the word 'surrender,' what thoughts come to mind? Can you think of any famous moments of surrender in history?*

Explain that today's passage will look at surrendering to Christ.

Open with prayer, inviting the Lord to help us believe His word and surrender as He calls.

STEP 2 - From Saul to Paul

Explain that this week's study was primarily a look at Saul's surrendering to Christ, so the first day dealt with his identity as a Pharisee.

Invite a volunteer to read the three numbered descriptions of Paul from the Day One and invite others to recall anything else they can add from memory.

Note the second paragraph from Day One is interpreted “Pharisee” to mean “loyal to God,” and explain how their focus was on following every instruction of God and making sure others did the same.

Invite volunteers to glance through Matthew 23 in their Bibles, reading verses 23-28 aloud.

STEP 3 - Definitions Matter

Invite a volunteer to **read** Galatians 1:6-8 aloud.

Ask: *According to Paul, what is the only standard for the gospel?*

Help learners see that the “gospel of Christ” at that time came only through the words of the apostles.

Ask: *So, then, what is our basis for the gospel today?*

Point out that the New Testament is the very words of those apostles, revealed to us through their testimonies and letters.

Read the last paragraph starting with, “...we must be sure that we have a firm understanding on the ‘what’ of the gospel” from Day Two.

Ask: *Do you have confidence in your understanding of the gospel?*

Challenge a few to share aloud their definition of the good news.

STEP 4 - Grace Alone

Invite a volunteer to **read** Romans 5:8-10 aloud.

Say: *We know plainly that Paul was a sinner before he encountered Christ; he was quick to lay down that old life.*

Read aloud the paragraph that begins, “Paul laid down who he was” from Day Three, second paragraph, and share an element of your pre-Jesus life that you may have been tempted to carry into your life of salvation in Christ.

Invite a volunteer to **read** Luke 9:23-24 aloud and stress the requirements for authentic Christianity, as found in the second to last paragraph from Day Three.

Ask: *Is self-denial, taking up our cross, and submitting to Christ optional, according to Luke 9?*

Reveal that Jesus Himself fulfilled each of these requirements in His life.

STEP 5 - Surrendering Dreams

Invite a volunteer to **read** Philippians 2:9-11 and Romans 10:9 aloud.

Point out that these verses (and many others) explicitly say that Jesus is Lord.

Ask: *What does the lordship of Christ mean for our day-to-day lives? What does it mean for our long-range dreams?*

Read aloud the second paragraph of Day Four.

Reveal that living under Christ's lordship means trusting Him to call the shots in our lives.

Help learners see that this yielded living is difficult but necessary for a healthy body of believers and for a healthy relationship with Jesus.

STEP 6 - Dreams Aligned

Share a time in your life when you became heavily influenced by a friend or family member, finding your tastes and habits closely aligned with theirs because of your closeness.

Read the following from Day Five, second paragraph: *You can't help but become like a person you are constantly around.*

Ask: *Does the same hold true with becoming more like Christ?*

Invite a few volunteers to read Philippians 2:5, Romans 8:29, and 2 Corinthians 3:18 aloud.

Read the third paragraph from Day Five that begins with "At the end of our lives" aloud.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Invite a volunteer to **read** Matthew 6:10 aloud.

Say: *This is the prayer Jesus gave as an example for us, and we should seriously consider if our dreams, hopes, and plans align with God's kingdom and will for us.*

Draw learners' attentions back to the sketch of a person holding a flag on the board.

Close in prayer, asking God to show each one if we're living surrendered to Him.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: Shift your focus from a self-centered interpretation to a God-centered perspective.

Focus on this goal: See your plans in light of God's bigger story.

Key Bible Passage: Romans 8:28

Before the Session

Draw a mirror on the board before class. You'll use this in Steps One and Two.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Direct attention to the mirror you drew on the board and

Ask: *Who used a mirror this morning? What did you use it for?*

Engage learners in sharing how they used it to make sure they looked appropriate (such as applying makeup) or to see themselves clearly (such as shaving).

Ask: *Have you ever used a mirror to look at something other than yourself?*

Point out that a dentist uses a mirror to see the back of your teeth, and a mechanic sometimes uses a mirror to see hidden spots in a car engine.

Say: *In this week's study, we considered how to shift our focus from a self-centered to God-centered.*

Open with prayer, seeking God's glory and conviction.

STEP 2 - Scripture Is Not Primarily about Me (Or You)

Point to the drawn mirror and **say**: *Many people look at God's Word as they might a mirror.*

Ask: *What does this reveal about me? or What is God trying to tell me?*

Point out that self-help books, personality quizzes, and a variety of other self-centered tools reveal what we already know: we live in a me-centered world, and we're almost all guilty.

Read the paragraph from Day One that begins "In seeking self-diagnosis" aloud and point out that the desire to apply all scripture is not only missing God's point but also sometimes impossible.

STEP 3 - The Grand Narrative

Instruct all learners to open their Bibles to Genesis 1. As a group, use the text of Genesis 1—3 to give a synopsis of the first three chapters.

Invite learners to Revelation 22 and, similarly, give a synopsis of that chapter.

Use the four major themes outlined in from Day Two to give the overview of the Bible (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration).

Say: *This is the major, overarching story of the Bible. So as we learn to be God-centered, we must look at each passage as to how it fits into His story and what it reveals about Him and mankind.*

Help learners see that, as we view the Bible this way, we will also begin to view ourselves as part of that overarching story.

STEP 4 - Context Matters

Instruct learners to turn to Jeremiah 29.

Read aloud verses 1-4, pointing out that this is clearly a word from God, through Jeremiah, to the Israelites living in exile in Babylon.

Ask: *Can someone please quote Jeremiah 29:11 for us?*

Point out that those words, that we might find so full of hope, are being delivered to a nation that has lost its land, its freedom, and its identity as God's chosen people.

Invite a volunteer to read Jeremiah 29:15-19 aloud.

Ask: *how does this additional text change how we might view Jeremiah 29:11?*

Read aloud the last two paragraphs from Day Three.

STEP 5 - Clear Perspective

Invite a volunteer to read Psalm 8:1-4 aloud. If you have a personal experience in which you distinctly remember a time of gazing into the heavens (in night or daytime) and dwelling on God, share that with the group. If not, read aloud the author's experience from Day Four.

Read (or quote) Romans 8:28 aloud.

Ask: *How can looking at the sky remind us that God's plan and kingdom are completely in His control and we are part of it?*

As a group, **consider** how we can get a better view of our lives in view of time in eternity.

STEP 6 - A Dream Laid Down

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Peter 1:3-9 aloud as others read along in their Bibles. As a group, go back through the scripture and mention each promise we're given for the future.

Say: *The Bible makes it clear: hard times come, even to God's faithful followers. But it's also clear that our eternity is secure and even our weakness will point to Christ's strength (2 Cor. 12:9).*

Help learners understand and believe that our end goal is not this life, but eternity, and this life is preparing us for it.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Read 2 Corinthians 4:17 aloud.

Ask for a show of hands: *Who is going through a trouble right now? Does it feel light and momentary?*

Read aloud the last two paragraphs from Day Five, encouraging learners to continue to see God in the Bible but also in their lives.

Say: *He is Lord of the big picture and the small details; as we walk through life, we can always point to Him.*

Close in prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: God calls you to be live out the fruits of the spirit.

Focus on this goal: Maturity requires transformation over time with requires testing.

Key Bible Passage: Galatians 5:22-26

Before the Session

Sketch some simple fruit drawings on the board. You'll use these in Step 1.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

As learners arrive, **invite** them to discuss their personal preference for fruit: which do they like most? Have you ever grown fruit? Have you ever traveled to a place with exceptional local fruit?

Choose one of the fruits on the board and briefly discuss the different colors the fruit reveals throughout its growing. (For example, the smallest strawberry starts out white/green. It then progresses to a pink, red, and then dark red.)

Ask: *Have you ever mistakenly eaten a fruit that wasn't ripe?*

Explain that today, we're going to talk about how we, like fruit, will take time to become mature followers of Christ.

Open with prayer, asking God to lead us to understanding and truth.

STEP 2 - A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit

Invite a volunteer to quote Galatians 5:22-23 aloud. Note that the first word (in most major translations) is "But."

Dig into the preceding thought by reading Galatians 5:19-21 aloud.

Say: *Together, we can see two distinct types of people: those who live according to the world and those who live according to the Spirit.*

Ask: *Does there seem to be any middle ground?*

Direct learners to read Galatians 5:19-23 and, as a group, **point out** the contrasting descriptions.

Read aloud the last paragraph of Day One and **engage** learners in how they've come to understand the spirit/believer cooperation in yielding fruit.

STEP 3 - The Comparison Trap

Read aloud the opening paragraph of Day Two and ask for a quick show of hands: *Who in here is guilty of comparison in the past month?*

Remind learners: *Our author wrote this week that comparison manifests itself in one of two ways: pride or insecurity.*

Invite a volunteer to read Proverbs 30:7-9 aloud

Guide learners to see how both pride and insecurity can easily take us away from focusing on God.

Use Day Two to guide learners through the sin that creeps up when we are discontent and feel like we are not enough, but also when we are full of selfish ambition and we feel we should be our own focus rather than God.

Read Philippians 2:3-4 aloud

Point out that we miss opportunities to minister when we point the spotlight inwardly.

STEP 4 - Retraining Our Reactions

Use the opening paragraph of Day Three to **point out**, just as we gain muscle memory in our bodies, we also pick up muscle memory in our spirit; sometimes, that's not a good thing.

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Peter 2:1 and Ephesians 4:22.

Ask: *What are the instructions in these verses?*

Read Galatians 5:16 aloud and help learners find confidence that it's not up to us to get rid of the muscle memory in our spirits, but we allow the Spirit to work in us to cleanse us from it.

STEP 5 - Tools for Fruitful Living

Explain: *As we yield fruit of the Spirit, we must consider what it takes to grow in our faith.*

Say: *Our author points to three basic spiritual disciplines. Let's explore those together.*

Invite a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 6:6 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17 aloud and use Day Four to explore the nourishment of the Bible.

Invite a volunteer to read Philippians 4:6 and Matthew 6:6, stressing the humility required for prayer.

Then **read** Acts 20:28 and use Day Four to stress that God's plan is for His church to work together to build His kingdom.

STEP 6 - Fruit Takes Time

Say: *It can take ten years for an apple tree to grow from a seed to fruit-bearing maturity. That's a lot of patient waiting for good fruit.*

Read the opening paragraph from Day Five

Encourage learners that it is through the difficult times that we learn to obey, trust, and grow.

Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 5:13 aloud.

Ask: *What does it mean, in our daily lives, to be salty? How does this idea of being salty reveal an element of bearing fruit?*

Help learners see that bearing fruit, and being salty, helps us stand apart in our worldly world.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Read the paragraph from Day Five that begins with, "The dreamer that walks" aloud.

Encourage learners who feel they are too far away from that kind of believer by briefly sharing how your slow and steady walk of faith has proven that God's Word is true.

Emphasize: *God changes us as we abide in Him.*

Close with prayer.

Leader Guide

The main point of this lesson is: God has given you a unique place in His kingdom work.

Focus on this goal: Don't compare yourself to others.

Key Bible Passage: 1 Corinthians 12:4–6

Before the Session

Draw a few wrapped gifts on the board, in a variety of sizes, patterns, and décor. You'll use this in Step 1.

Ask your children and preschool directors for a list of volunteer positions that need filling in those departments. You'll use it in Step Three.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Invite volunteers to consider the drawings of gifts on the board.

Share a time in your life that you received a beautifully-wrapped gift and what was inside.

Compare that to a time you received a gift that came in the plastic bag from the store or maybe no wrapping at all.

Say: *Many people use gift bags for gift giving these days, but do we have any in here today who still enjoy wrapping a gift to make it beautiful?*

Explain that this week's study was the last in the book *A Holy Pursuit* by Dianne Jago.

Open with prayer, seeking God's face as you hear His Word today.

STEP 2 - Every Role Matters

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 aloud.

Remind learners that our author once heard someone say she thought she was “just ‘extra filler’ in God’ plan.”

Direct learners back to 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.

Ask: *What would Paul say about the concept of being ‘filler’ in the body of Christ?*

Point out that the word “same” appears three times; stress that our differences all point to the same focus: Christ.

As a group, **make** a list of people in the church who make it work well; start with some of the more obvious and dig into the positions with little to no acclaim.

Ask: *How can we see every gifting and role pointing to the Lord?*

Read the last paragraph of Day One aloud.

STEP 3 - Stewarding Gifts for Others

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Peter 4:10.

Ask: *According to this passage, what are we to do with the gifts God has given us?*

Challenge learners to consider a gift they were given as a child but refused to share it with others; was that the right attitude as a gift recipient?

Read aloud the paragraph from Day Two that begins, “I doubt there is any church or ministry”

Share the list of needs from your local church’s children’s and preschool department that you brought.

Point out that many children would benefit from God’s gifts to your class.

STEP 4 - Embracing Your Unique Gifts

Read aloud the opening paragraph of Day Three.

Share a time in your life when you found yourself either not serving in your local church or serving in a way that felt like a misuse of your gifts.

Share how you came to understand God’s gifting and the different ways you’ve allowed Him to use you in the church and in your community.

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 12:3-13 aloud.

Consider that each gift of the Spirit is working that brings joy to others and glory to God.

STEP 5 - Finding Purpose in the Ordinary

Invite a volunteer to read Colossians 3:12-17 aloud.

As a group, **consider** how the instructions in these verses point to glorifying God in all we do.

Use the opening paragraph of Day Four to **point out** that even our ordinary, everyday events hold the opportunity to make an impact in God's kingdom.

Read aloud the Michael Horton quote from Day Four and engage learners in discussing the idea that a "supporting cast" isn't in line with the Gospel.

Share how you personally struggle to serve the Lord in daily activities.

STEP 6 - Glorifying God in Everyday Life

Invite a few volunteers to read 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Psalm 150:6 aloud.

Point out that our everyday lives are made to glorify God and praise Him.

Ask for a show of hands to the questions: *Who has moments in every day that seems to be not really that spectacular? How do we allow those moments to glorify God?*

As a group, **consider** that it's our yielding to God's plan, our faith in His purpose, and our desire to please Him that transforms the mundane into the glorious.

Invite a volunteer to read the quote in Day Five aloud.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Remind learners that this is the last day of discussion for *A Holy Pursuit* and ask learners to share what quote or information they will take away from the book.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud the paragraph that begins "It is here we must ask ourselves" aloud.

Close in prayer, seeking God's continuing work in each of our lives, for His glory.