

LESSON 6

THE TEN BEST WAYS

LESSON NOTES

**FOCUS: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (EXODUS 20:1-17;
DEUTERONOMY 5:1-21)**

- SACRED STORY
- CORE PRESENTATION

THE MATERIAL

- LOCATION: SACRED STORY SHELVES
- PIECES: DESERT BOX, PEOPLE OF GOD, HEART-SHAPED BOX WITH
COMMANDMENTS, LARGE ROCK
- UNDERLAY: NONE

BACKGROUND

God was present to Moses at Sinai three times. First, God was present in the burning bush when God revealed to Moses the name of God (Exodus 3:1-6). Second, God was present when giving the Ten Commandments to the people through Moses (Exodus 19:18-20:1-17). Finally, after breaking the tablets in anger, Moses climbed up Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments a second time (Exodus 34).

On the last occasion, Moses bargained with God three times to see God's face (Exodus 33:12-14, 15-17, 18-22). But God did not allow this. No one could see God's face and live, so God put Moses in an opening in the rock and covered him until the dazzling light of God's presence had passed by.

NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

You'll use the desert box for this presentation. You'll also need the basket with the People of God figures from the Exodus story. You'll find the remaining materials—a heart-shaped box and a rock—to the right of the Exodus story materials.

In the heart-shaped box are three shapes (two tablets and a base piece) that fit together to form a heart shape. One tablet shape reads *Love God*. A second tablet reads

Love people. The third piece, the base piece, reads *God loves you.* There are also ten more tablet pieces, one for each of the Ten Commandments.

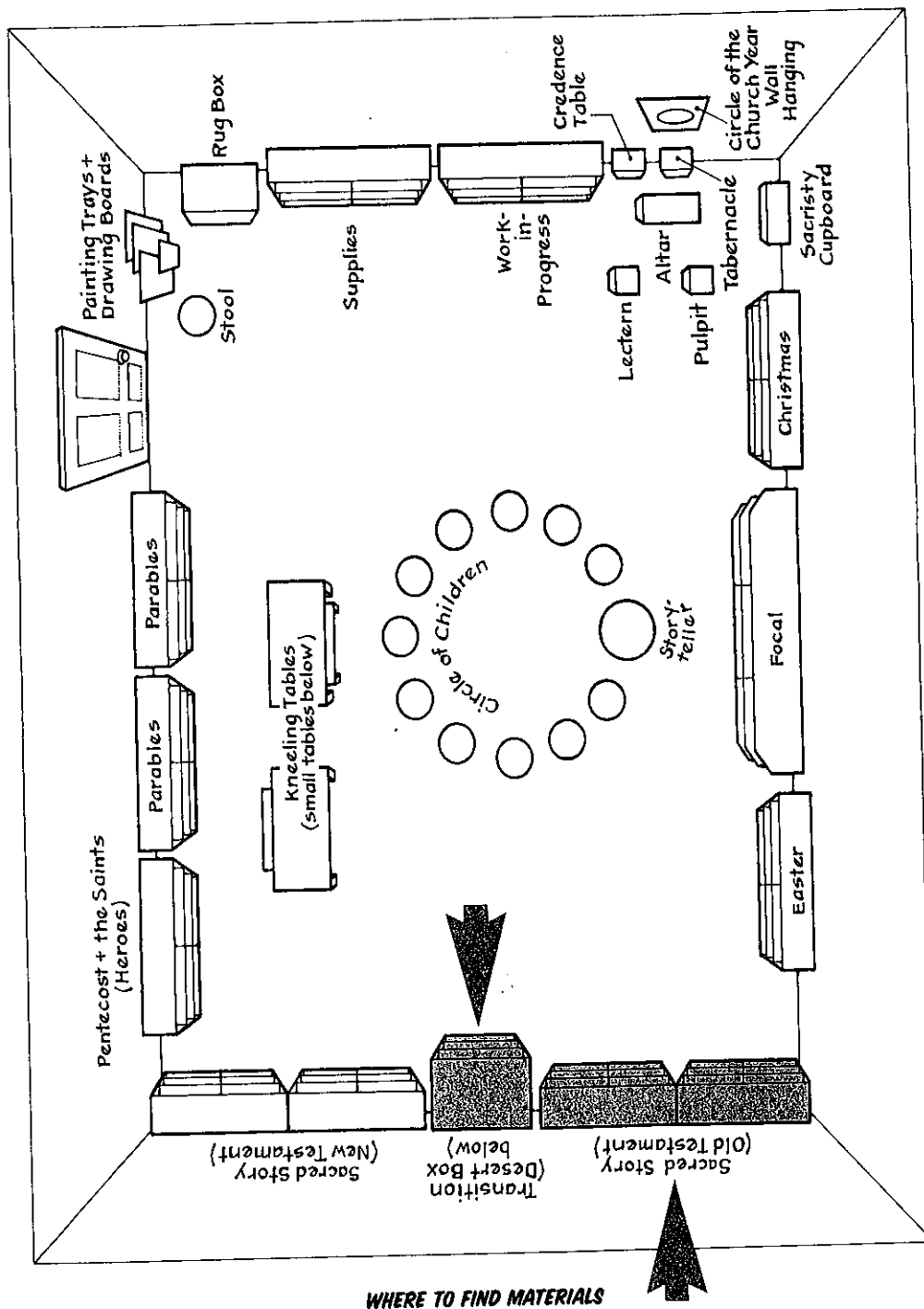
Each of the ten tablets are inscribed with a summary statement of one commandment. (See story for details.) Use dots on the back of the tablets—for example, two dots on the tablet with the second commandment—to organize this material more clearly. Finally, you need a large, rough rock to represent Mt. Sinai. To protect the wood of the shelf, place this rock on a cloth.

SPECIAL NOTES

Storytelling tips: We suggest that the story of Moses and the burning bush is part of the story of Moses' life, best told through an object box. You'll find more information about making and using object boxes on pages 22 and 72 in *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 1: How to Lead Godly Play Lessons*.

The story of the golden calf and Moses' third encounter with God are bracketed in the text for your convenience. Omit these sections, because they distract from the core narrative. However, if children ask questions about these details you will be ready to respond in narrative instead of with an explanation.

For three- to six-year-olds, use just the three summary tablets in telling the story: *Love God, Love people* and *God loves you.* Older children can hear all the commandments. From the age of nine and up, you can engage them in deeper discussion.



MOVEMENTS

Bring the desert box to the circle. Leave the lid on it. Go to the shelf and bring to the circle the People of God, Mt. Sinai and the heart-shaped box with the Ten Commandments.

Once you have the material assembled, sit and look at the desert box for a moment. If the children are comfortable and settled, remove the lid and begin the lesson. If they are not yet ready, leave the lid on and begin to talk about the desert box before removing the lid.

Put some of the people of God at your far right at the edge of the desert box. Arrange them in a circle. Also, place Mt. Sinai in the left hand corner of the desert box, the corner nearest you.

WORDS

Watch. Watch where I go to get the lesson. See? Here it is. Now you will always know where to find it.

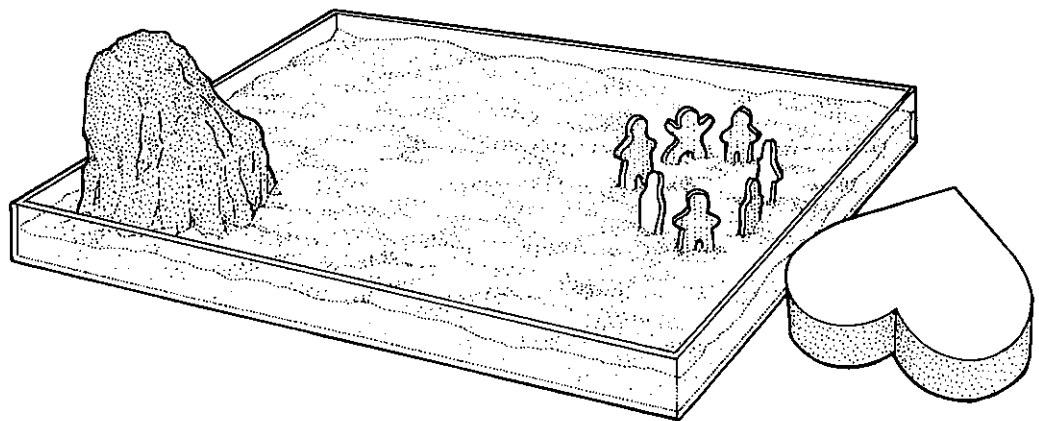
This is the desert. It is a dangerous place. People do not go into the desert unless they have to. There is no water there, and without water we die. There is no food there. Without food we die.

When the wind blows, it changes the shape of the desert. People get lost. Some never come back.

In the daytime the sun is so hot that people must wear lots of clothes to protect themselves from the sun and the blowing sand. The sand stings when it hits your skin. The sun scorches you by day. At night it is cold. You need many clothes to keep warm. The desert is a dangerous place. People only go there if they have to.

The people of God went through the water into freedom. They were free, and Miriam led the dancing!

Now that the people are free, they can go anywhere they want to go and do anything they want to do. Where will they go now? What is the best way?



THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN THE DESERT (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

MOVEMENTS

Show the heart-shaped box as you say this, but don't open it yet.

Begin to move the people to your left. Mt. Sinai is in the lower left corner of the desert box, closest to you, so that most of the children can see what happens. If you put it in one of corners closest to the children, it will block the view of many of the children. Move the People carefully until they are all at the foot of the mountain.

Move Moses up to the top of the rock. As he moves up the mountain, hide the figure in your hand to show his disappearing in the smoke.

Move Moses down the mountain, revealing him from your closed hand, and place him in the sand.

[If you choose, you can add this bracketed part of the story. There is no need to make a golden calf. The children can use their imaginations to complete the scene.]

WORDS

☞ God loved the People so much that God showed them the Ten Best Ways to Live. Sometimes these ways are called the Ten Commandments.

☞ As the people traveled across the desert, they followed fire by night and smoke by day. They began to complain. Some even wanted to go back to Egypt. There was not enough food. There was not enough water. God helped Moses find food and water. Finally they came to the great mountain.

☞ The People came close to the mountain, but they were afraid to touch it. Mount Sinai was covered with fire and smoke. Moses was the only one who had the courage to climb up into the fire and smoke to meet God.

When Moses was on top of the mountain, he came so close to God, and God came so close to him, that he knew what God wanted him to do. God wanted him to write the Ten Best Ways to Live on stones and bring them down the mountain to the People.

☞ God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. Moses gave them to the people and they gave them to us.

☞ [The first time Moses was on the mountain, the people grew tired of waiting for him to come back. They wanted a god they could see, so they melted all of their gold and molded a golden calf to worship as if it were God. When Moses saw the idol they had made and the people dancing around it, he was angry. He threw down the two tablets of the law and broke them.]

[The next day Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin." He told them that he would climb the mountain again. Perhaps God would forgive them if he went back.]

[When Moses was on the mountain, he wanted to come even closer to God's presence. He wanted to see God's face. "Show me your glory," Moses said. God said, "You cannot see my face and live."]

MOVEMENTS

[Place your hand, palm down, hiding Moses.]

When the commandments are finally presented to the people, begin to lay them out. Begin first with the summary. One tablet says, "Love God." The other one says, "Love People." A third triangular piece completes the shape of a heart, and says, "God loves us." As you lay these pieces flat in the sand, read them aloud:

Sometimes with three- to six-year-olds, it is good to stop with the summary and skip ahead to the wondering questions. With older children, you can move through all of the commandments.

As you read each of the commandments, place that tablet upright in the sand with the writing facing the children. A small number or row of dots on the backs of the commandments will guide you during the discussion.

The way the commandments are laid out is significant. There are the ones for being close to God, and the ones for being close to people, and there is one for both. It stands in the sand between the other two categories.

Place the first three tablets in a line, upright in the sand next to "Love God." Read each slowly.

WORDS

[God put Moses in a cleft of the rock and put his hand over him to protect him from God's presence. God took away the hand, after passing by, and Moses saw God's back.]

[Meeting God face to face is sometimes too much for us. When we see God's back, we can follow God all our days.]

☉ Love God. Love people. God loves us.

- ☉ 1. Don't serve other gods.
- ☉ 2. Make no idols to worship.
- ☉ 3. Be serious when you say my name

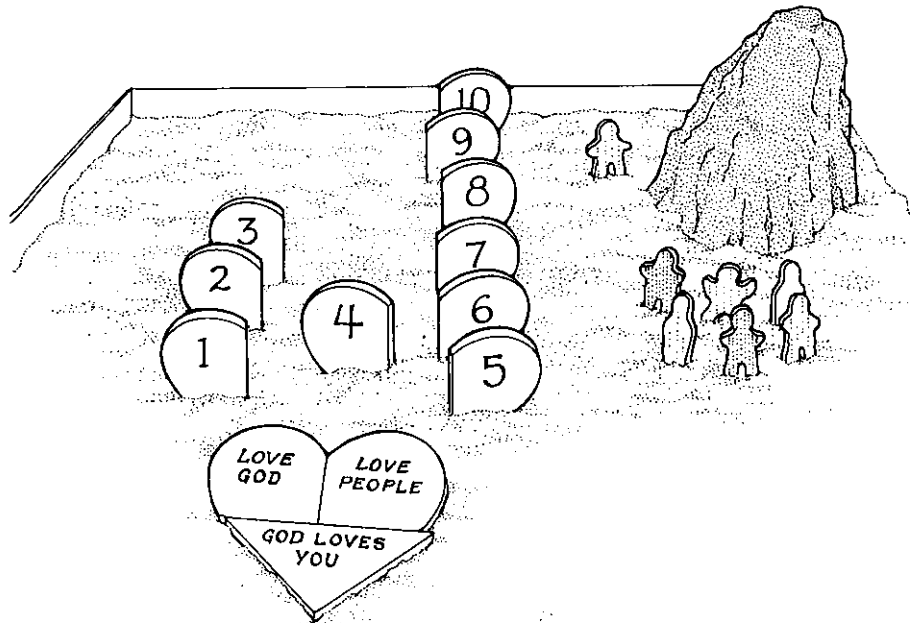
MOVEMENTS

Read the fourth tablet and place it in a middle position in the sand since it tells us how to love both God and people.

Read the next tablets slowly and place them next to "Love People." Say each one with kindness and understanding. After reading #7 you may want to say, "You know, when people get married they think they will be married forever. Sometimes it just doesn't work out."

WORDS

4. Keep the Sabbath holy.
5. Honor your mother and father.
6. Don't kill.
7. Don't break your marriage.
8. Don't steal.
9. Don't lie.
10. Don't even want what others have.



THE TEN BEST WAYS TO LIVE (CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE)

I know. These are all hard. God did not say that these are the "ten easy things to do." They are the Ten Best Ways to Live, the Ten Commandments. They are hard, perhaps even impossible, but we are supposed to try.

They mark the best way—like stones can show the right path.

MOVEMENTS

Important discussions can arise from each of the "best ways" or commandments. Take your time. Wait, so children can raise issues and misunderstandings. With children about the age of ten, you may want to put two commandments such as "Honor" and "Do not lie" side by side in the sand and ask how you can keep both if Mommy or Daddy ask you to tell a lie. Another suggestion is to ask how we can keep "Do not kill" and stay alive? Almost everything we eat is alive from chickens and cows to carrots and lettuce.

When the discussion quiets down, you can begin the wondering.

When the wondering about the Ten Commandments is finished, turn back to the whole story. The story can get lost as the wondering about the Ten Best Ways takes place. It is now time to put all of that discussion back into the context of how God loves us so much that God gave us the Ten Best Ways to Live.

When all the wondering is finished, put the materials away and invite the children, one by one, to get out their work.

WORDS

I wonder which one of the Ten Best Ways you like the best?

I wonder which one is most important?

I wonder which one is especially for you?

I wonder if there are any we can leave out and still have all we need?

Now, let's go back again to the story. I wonder what part of the whole story you like best?

I wonder what part of the story is the most important?

I wonder where you are in the story or what part of the story is about you?

I wonder if there is any part of the story we can leave out and still have all the story we need?