



# IMAGES OF FAITH

The Instructor's Handbook

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# IMAGES OF FAITH



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Warm Greetings!

The faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary together with the good folks throughout the Concordia University System and the staff of CUEnet are very pleased to bring to you the “Images of Faith” project. It is our hope that this dynamic multi-media program will become a favored tool to augment the ones that you currently use for teaching confirmation and Bible classes to youth.

We are particularly excited about the insights you will discover from faith development specialist Dr. Rebecca Peters and clinical psychologist Dr. Buddy Mendez. We believe their comments will prove helpful to you as you address the young adolescents in your classes.

We trust this unique approach to learning will enhance the joy you and your students experience as you explore essential teachings of the faith.

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**This handbook is designed to make the Images of Faith material easy to use.**

**The right-hand pages (the odd-numbered pages) are designed so as to allow easy copying for the creation of student handouts, as desired by the instructor.**

**The left-hand pages (the even-numbered pages) are available for the instructor to utilize for teaching notes. These pages may also contain a number of specific resources for the instructor, including helpful commentary and tips, additional quotes and stories, and reminders.**

# INTRODUCTION TO IMAGES OF FAITH

## OVERVIEW

The Images of Faith project provides multi-media learning experiences for confirmation-age youth which reveal their identity as children of a loving God within the context of the Christian Church's most basic teachings. Your teens will enjoy the pace and variety of the presentations, as well as the optional learning activities, including discussion questions, small group work, stories, quotations, servant events and memory work which accompany the lessons. Faith development specialist Dr. Rebecca Peters and clinical psychologist Dr. Buddy Mendez augment the project with insights to the maturation of young adolescents.

## CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

The images you are about to enjoy honor faith and the relationship of the young believer to God while simultaneously portraying adolescent struggles. Each multi-media experience is intended to generate lively conversation among the youth and between the youth and their instructor. The media experiences come with background material, learning activities, stories, quotations, servant events and memory work. The background material and the learning activities are written as though speaking to early adolescents, thus suggesting language which the instructor might use. The average reading difficulty of the material included within Images of Faith is 7.5 grade level, with some material being a little more difficult and some a little less difficult. Instructors should feel free to use as much or as little of the background material and learning activities as they wish. Everything is optional. Obviously, the same can be said for the quotations and memory work, although it is hoped the instructors will demand some level of memorization. The instructor is free to copy any or all of the material for sharing with the learners.

During the early part of the material, special attention is paid to Intersections between early-adolescent psychology and the lesson under consideration. Here the instructor will want to be a little more discerning as to what should be printed for the learners. The Intersections are primarily intended to be helpful to instructors as they design learning experiences. Also interspersed within the background material, the instructor will find writing labeled Time Out for Instructors, which provides explanations of critical biblical teachings. Here the reading levels are beyond the average middle school learner.

Biblical quotations are from the English Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise marked. Instructors are encouraged not only to ask students to memorize the Bible passages found in the Memory Work sections, but wherever Bible passages are noted throughout the program.

The series will cover the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed (with references to the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds), the Lord's Prayer, the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and Confession and Absolution. Occasionally references will be made to other doctrines of the Church. In its entirety, Images of Faith will provide an excellent overview of biblical theology. Certainly Images of Faith could also be used with high school youth or adults as part of a refresher course on the basic teachings of the Bible.

One further note: instructors may find it helpful to show the media presentations more than once, as doing so will enhance learner comprehension and make the learning activities more accessible.



## PRIMARY AUDIENCE

The intended audience for Images of Faith is the congregation's young adolescents, almost all of whom exhibit unbounded energy, a high degree of idealism, a keen sense of social justice, and a need to understand and balance their place in the family with a newly blossoming desire for autonomy and self-knowledge. While every child is unique and special, all young people encounter questions and emotions which create concerns in their lives. For instance, young teens are just beginning to think abstractly, and they frequently struggle with issues that are not perfectly "black or white." Moreover, as the maturing child transitions toward middle adolescence, acceptance by peers takes on increasing importance, adding to an already turbulent psychological mix. The young teenager holds many newly forming values in tension with each other and with the security of the family. When one or more of the basic elements of psychological well-being is in a state of heightened stress, the result can be a sense of deprivation resulting in edginess to cover insecurity, defiant behavior to cloak fear, or apathy to mask uncertainty – all of which interfere with learning, self-acceptance, satisfying relationships and wholesome faith development. Additionally, these stressors reduce the attention span of the maturing adolescent. Only when tensions are addressed without threat by trusted and patient adults can the teenager focus on growth, especially within the affective domain of learning. Because authentic communication to young teens must take such developmental challenges into account, the multi-media experiences and learning activities for Images of Faith reflect accurately and with empathy the questions that dominate the mind and heart of young teens, thus being faithful to the formative psychology of emerging adolescence.

If Images of Faith is used with older adolescents or adults, the instructor may want to modify some of the learning activities to make them age-appropriate.

## PERSPECTIVE

Catechesis traditionally begins with the Ten Commandments as God's imperatives for His people, and as a supplement to traditional catechesis Images of Faith begins here, as well. Teenagers know that when God's children fail to abide by the Lord's imperatives, they do well to seek His forgiveness through prayer and confession. On the other hand, most young adolescents have yet to come to view the Ten Commandments as descriptors of the sanctified life; that is, the behaviors that are prompted by the Spirit following baptism and justification, the behaviors the believer exhibits until such time as the force of sin is allowed to disrupt the Spirit's work. Because of the often overwhelming power of sin, particularly in the life of a young Christian, the preeminent aim of Images of Faith is for young teenagers to embrace the Lord's forgiveness while simultaneously viewing themselves as being carried by Him. The Lord's recreative, life-giving power blesses the teenager to become God's instrument, even as God chose to use St. Paul as His instrument (Acts 9:15). Christian maturation is characterized by an ever-deepening understanding that "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20)

Underlying everything in the multi-media presentations is the image of God as the great giver of gifts, most especially giving the gift of Himself through His flawless Word (see Ps.12). He gave life and when His children ruined His gift, He gave the promise of life anew and kept that promise through the historic figures of the Old Testament and finally in the Christ child. God gives blessing upon blessing. Confirmation is a time of courtship between the teenager and God, a time to literally fall in love with the Giver or all good gifts. When King David surveyed the night-time sky, he was amazed that God would reach out to him, yet that is exactly what God did then and still does today!

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# LEARNING FROM EXPERTS IN ADOLESCENT PSYCHOLOGY

A video introduction to early adolescent psychology and learning by faith development specialist Dr. Rebecca Peters and clinical psychologist Dr. Buddy Mendez from the faculty of Concordia University—Irvine, California, accompanies Images of Faith. Drs. Peters and Mendez speak of the transition young boys and girls make between the gentle life of a child and the tumultuous years of early and middle adolescence.

## TIME OUT FOR INSTRUCTORS

Occasionally Images of Faith offers a segment entitled “Time Out for Instructors.” These pieces are intended to provide the instructor with deeper notes related to the lessons at hand.

## CONCLUSION

We trust you and your students will find the experiences you are about to see and hear compelling. Our goal is to be on target for the Connected Generation!

We encourage instructors to display the media presentations multiple times to ingrain the concepts into the minds of young learners. Instructors may also wish to consider reading the slides aloud to aid the learning process.

Images of Faith has been created to be integrated with your previously successful teaching strategies. We believe you will be more than satisfied with the topics covered and the results achieved.

### Legend:

- The color **red** denotes material related to early adolescent development and story interludes.
- The color **purple** denotes material specifically helpful to the instructor.
- The color **green** denotes quotes from the Bible, quotes from other literature, an original story or memory work.

### The Asterisk:

- An asterisk \* has been placed alongside the most critical learning activities as a help for those instructors whose time for teaching is limited.

**The Introduction is to be presented by the Instructor or distributed to the students.**

**The First Commandment is the foundation for the other Commandments. If this commandment is kept, all others will follow. Break one of the later commandments and the First Commandment is also broken. Therefore, the Background Information and the Learning Activities are far more extensive for the First Commandment than for any of the following topics. Once the students master the First Commandment, the remainder of the learning for the Commandments will be accelerated.**



# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

## Introduction

Sacred Scripture describes a God who gives. He gives the heavens and the earth. He gives the sun, the moon and the stars. He gives land and sea creatures. He gives each according to its own kind. He gives special life to man and woman. He creates them in His image. The opening chapters of the Bible are remarkably pointed in describing the creation of man and woman as the apex and culmination of God's work. In sharp contrast to modern theories so often advanced, man and woman are neither accidental nor incidental; rather, the drama of creation is ordered around human good and human life. Indeed in Genesis Chapter 2, the intimate way in which God involves Himself in the creation of woman is testimony to God's care and nurture of your first parents, Adam and Eve. Genesis describes a God who graciously gives and never stops giving.

So complete and unqualified is God's giving that He endowed man and woman with every opportunity to live in beautiful communion with Him forever. Such a complete extension of love called for man and woman to obey their Creator over against any alternative. Tragically, Adam and Eve choose to seek their own image rather than that which God so graciously had given. Not unlike a loving parent who allows a son and daughter to make the choice of which friends to embrace, there was "risk" for your heavenly Father. Of course God knew what Adam and Eve would do in the Garden, yet despite humankind's rebellion, God once again gave. Your heavenly Father immediately responded to Adam and Eve's sin with the promise of a Redeemer, and the remainder of the Old Testament is a commentary on how that glorious promise is carried in the blood and the flesh of ancient Israel.

Among God's great gifts are the Commandments, given as part of the Exodus history. The Commandments describe God's non-negotiable expectations of humankind. And because human beings have inherited sinfulness from Adam and Eve, the Commandments serve as a mirror to man's sin and his desperate need for a Savior. While this is most certainly true, it is also important for you to remember that God gives the Commandments to His children to regulate life to the end that your everyday living might remain synchronized with the creative energy that brought life into existence. God's laws are meant to make life better; they are never intended to rob humankind of joy or meaning. The Commandments foster identity for the child of God and underpin the God-man relationship.

The First Commandment describes God's preferred relationship between Creator and creature. The First Commandment derives from the fact that God is the source of everything and therefore deserves man's absolute respect and trust. When God speaks, creation follows! Later in the history of God's people, the voice of God actually alters what men and women think of as reality. You can see this phenomenon when Jesus speaks to the waters of the Sea of Galilee or to Jairus' daughter. In the First Commandment, God establishes an absolute Law of life for you to follow when He tells you as a loving Father that you are to depend only upon Him and in no other person or thing—particularly not in yourselves—because only He has true power and authority to meet your needs. Your relationship with God is the foundation upon which the rest of life is constructed. The images of the first lesson vividly portray this thought.

**The Introduction is to be presented by the Instructor or distributed to the students.**



# THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

You shall have no other gods before Me.

As teenagers you know what rules are all about. For the person who stands apart from God, the First Commandment and the other nine Commandments may seem like rules in this common sense of the term, yet the Commandments are more important. They are absolute and non-negotiable. Each Commandment describes a boundary beyond which humans are not permitted to go. Once humans cross God's boundary, their conscience informs them that they have sinned, as St. Paul explains in Romans 2:14-15. Sometimes humans



try to fool themselves into believing that their actions are permitted when in fact they are not. An example would be King David's relationship with Bathsheba. In such an instance, people need to be reminded of God's boundaries, even as the Prophet Nathan reminded David in 2 Samuel 12. What a story!

So Commandments are unconditional rules and should never be broken. This being said, you are also challenged to think of the Commandments as laws in the sense of the

laws in physics. The laws of physics describe expected outcomes. The law of gravity, for instance, leads you to anticipate that if a stone is held above the floor and released, the stone will fall. The law of gravity also leads you to expect the ocean's tide. When God led His people out of their bondage in Egypt, He announced laws regarding the relationship they were to expect between a protecting God and His redeemed men and women, boys and girls. God says, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before [in addition to] me" (Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21). Like the laws



of physics, the Commandments describe how life works. Follow the Commandments and life works well; depart from the Commandments and life gradually crumbles apart. Perhaps it is helpful to think of the Commandments as God's blueprint for a life.

In the First Commandment you find the primary element of God's blueprint: trust. If you break this Commandment, you are in deep trouble and need to ask forgiveness from God while making up your mind never to break it again.

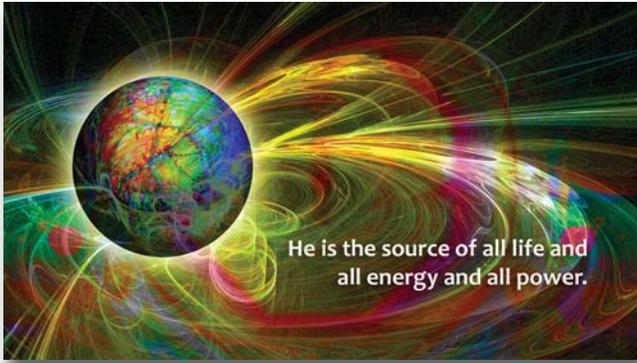
When you are in a right relationship with God, you will place your complete trust in Him. One last word: you will do well to remember that God is not saying that He should be the first among all the gods you trust; He is saying He is the only One you are to trust. Think of it this way: trusting God on the spiritual level is like breathing on the physical level.

The theme of the first lesson is this: Your God is a creating, giving God. His love for you is so full, He gave of

**INTERSECTION:** Young adolescents are interested in relationships—both those of family and with God. The foundation of their relationship with God is the trust He requires His children to place in Him. Trust is also the foundation of human relationships, including those of the family.

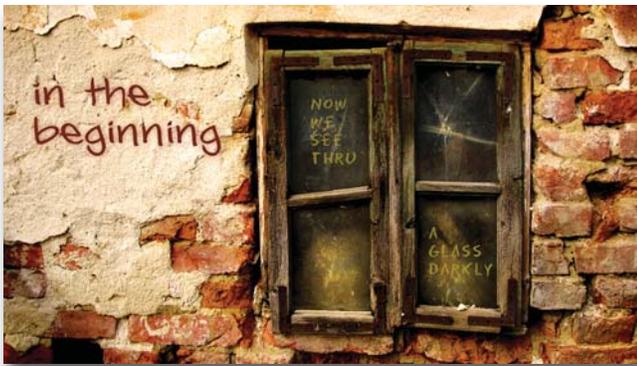
**INTERSECTION:** How can the teenager be certain of God's forgiveness? It may be beneficial to spend some time with 1 John 1:7, Acts 10:43 and Romans 6:11.

Himself on Calvary, and He gives of Himself every time you celebrate Holy Communion.



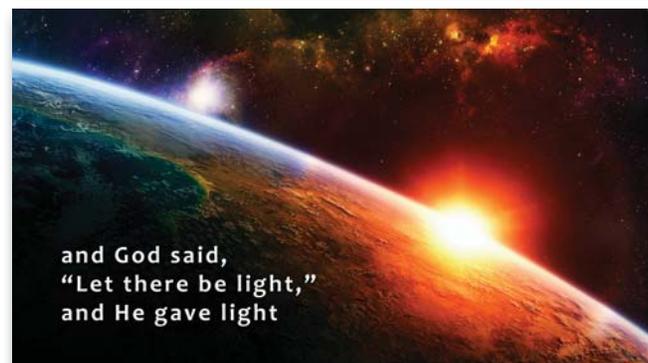
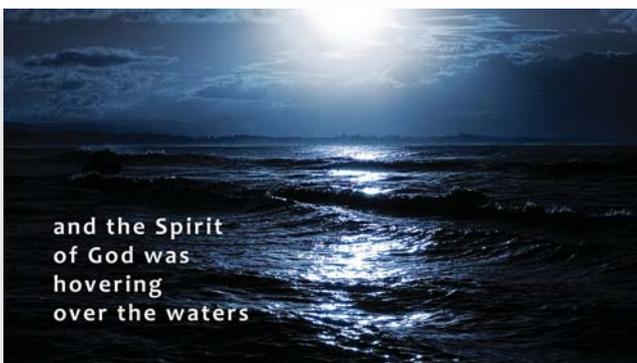
The image in front of you makes the point that only God has the power to create gifts out of nothing at all! While at times it may appear that you can turn to other sources for what you feel you want, the truth is that nothing else or no one else can truly meet your needs. It is also vital to remember that God intends to bless His children. He blessed Noah and Abraham, and the list goes on and on in one Old Testament story after another. These stories also make it clear that even God's most faithful children do not always understand their own needs well. So from time to

time God may even give His people challenges—as another form of blessing!



The image launches you into the history of creation. While you may not immediately understand the relationship between the creation of the world and the First Commandment, the unfolding images make clear that because God is the source of everything that exists, He wants you to trust only in Him and to turn only to Him for your needs.

Do you sometimes think abstractly? The interpretation of metaphors demands abstract thinking, and some of the images in this lesson are metaphors. If you find interpreting visual metaphors pretty difficult to do, please be patient with yourself. With just a little practice, you will catch on to the thinking required. And remember,



**INTERSECTION:** Early-adolescent psychology reveals the onset of tension for youth as they struggle to maintain close identity with the family while simultaneously being drawn into closer and closer identity with the peer group. For instance, while a teen growing up in a Christian family may feel comfortable subscribing to the creation account in Genesis at home, that same teenager may feel less comfortable embracing the creation story when surrounded by peers who openly believe the Theory of Evolution. Arming young people with substantive ideas about the problems faced by the Theory of Evolution is important. (See the First Article of the Apostles' Creed beginning on page 96.)

Beginning in the 1960's and lasting well into the early 1980's, the book *Biochemical Predestination* was one of the leading textbooks for college students studying the Theory of Evolution. The book was authored by chemical evolution theorist Dean H. Kenyon, a professor at San Francisco State University. As Dr. Kenyon's investigations into the origins of the universe continued into the later 1980s and 1990s, a strange thing happened. Kenyon came to realize that the Theory of Evolution simply could not stand up against rigorous testing in the light of new discoveries about DNA. Now the man who was one of the chief defenders of Evolution has become one of its chief opponents.

British author C.S. Lewis once observed, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen; not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

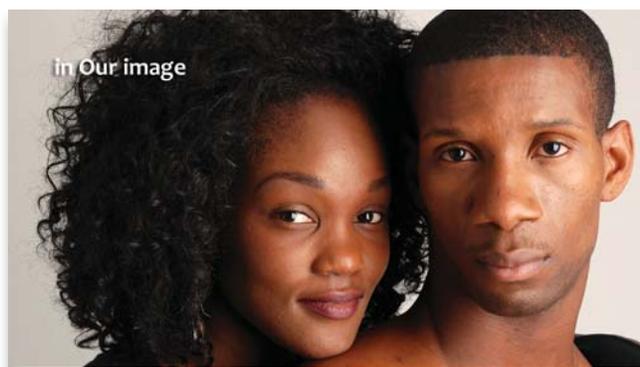
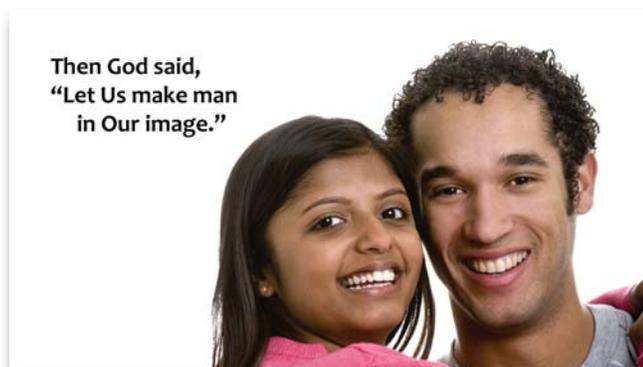
**INTERSECTION:** Teenagers know the value of love. In 1 John 4:8 the Bible declares that God is love. The doctrine of the Trinity and the fact that God is love intersect in a most wonderful way. Please read and talk about John 3:35 together. Prior to the creation of the world, the three persons of the Trinity were loving each other, even as they love you today. God is love! This is a crucial part of Christian identity.

**INTERSECTION:** Through age ten, children draw their identities almost exclusively from their parents or guardians, as well as older brothers and sisters—even in those instances where the relationships are not entirely healthy. Little girls dress like mommy, and little boys dream of becoming the same kind of worker as daddy. The adults and older siblings are referred to as role models for the children. With the onset of adolescence, the child begins to look beyond the family for the first time, experiencing tension when newly discovered role models differ significantly from the role models of earlier childhood. Perceptive parents, ministers and youth leaders can be helpful, gently guiding young adolescents to properly evaluate all role models.

a metaphor does not always correspond in every detail to the thing being compared. There are few perfect metaphors.

The light in the four images above is metaphorical for the presence of God in the midst of creation. Did you notice that the water in the third image is a direct portrayal of the word “water” in the passage in Genesis, but the glowing light is not? Rather, the light is again a metaphor for God, whom the Bible refers to as light in John 1:4-5. While the creation of the sun can be seen in the fourth image, the light of God is depicted in this image, too. You and your friends may enjoy debating which of these four pictorial metaphors is the most imaginative.

Notice what happens when God speaks in verse three of Genesis 1. His voice has the power to create light out of nothing at all. Only He can do that. In the fifth chapter of Mark, the Apostle describes a scene in which Jesus is approached by a ruler from the synagogue. The man’s daughter is so ill she may soon die, and so the man begs the Lord for help. Jesus agrees to go to the man’s house, but Jesus is delayed. Meanwhile and much to the sorrow of the father, a servant approaches, announcing that the girl has died. When the voice of Jesus says the girl is not dead but sleeping, the nature of the situation—the very nature of reality itself—is changed. The young girl was dead, but now she is sleeping and Jesus wakes her. Your voices cannot turn death into life, but the voice of God can. Once you begin to comprehend the extraordinary power in God’s voice, your confidence will grow when you turn to Him in prayer. Take a moment to read Psalm 33:6 together.



These images offer a fascinating opportunity to begin a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity! In the first chapter of Genesis, God is quoted as saying, “Let us make man in our image.” In addition to the Heavenly Father, who else is part of the Trinity? Were all three persons of the Trinity present at the time of Creation? You may also enjoy discussing among yourselves the circumstances which have given rise to the wondrous variations we find among human beings on earth today. What do you think explains these differences?

From time to time do you worry about failing in your classes at school or in sports? Do your parents ever worry about you becoming too wrapped up in your hobbies, such as music or computer games? Such worries are also the concern of the First Commandment. What God does not want to see happen is that you begin to draw your primary identity from sports or academic studies or music or hobbies or anything else other than

**INTERSECTION:** As mentioned earlier, the young adolescent is only now beginning to look beyond the family for new role models and authority figures. For some teens the appeal of authority beyond the home may lead to feeling like a traitor to parents and older brothers and sisters. Couple this tension with the temptation to select inappropriate heroes outside of the home and the mix can quickly become perilous, frequently expressing itself in defiance or silence. Talking with trusted adults throughout the journey of early and later adolescence often makes a wonderful difference for struggling teenagers. Drs. Peters and Mendez shared valuable ideas about being someone teens can trust, someone teens will talk to and whose advice teens will follow. Do you recall the importance Mendez and Peters placed on being authentic? Authenticity pulls early adolescents close, while power expressed without love drives them away. Finally, what did Dr. Mendez have to say about allowing early adolescents to make some choices without interference from persons in positions of power?

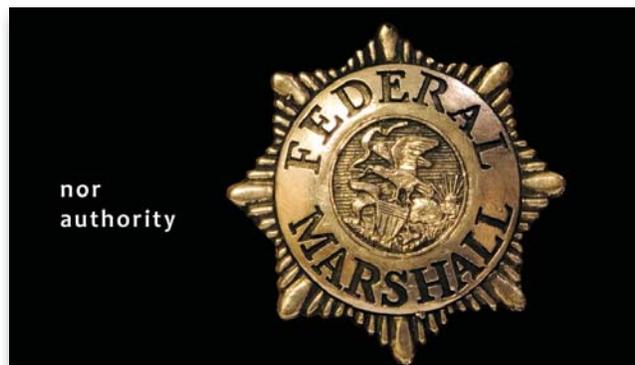
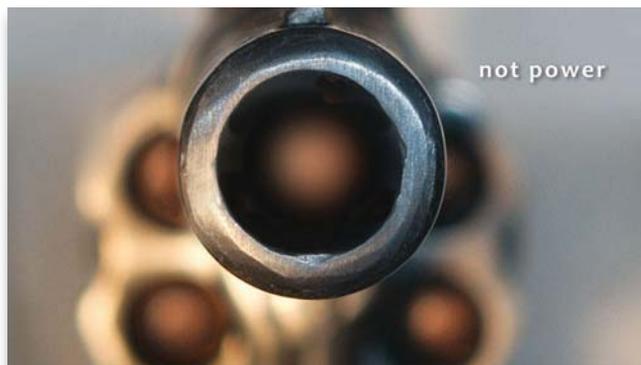
**INTERSECTION:** Young adolescents are maturing psychologically at break-neck speed. While a short time ago it did not matter if the door to their room was open, the teen now is demanding privacy both from parental intrusion and from the presence of siblings. Developing a healthy sense of autonomy is critically important for successful adulthood, but the journey into a proper amount of privacy can be fraught with misunderstanding all around. Once again open conversation between pastor and parents and between parents and teens is extraordinarily valuable. Bear in mind, however, that the young adolescent will quickly seek comparison between what s/he hears from the adults in his/her life with that being heard by peers in their homes.



Him. Whenever you are in danger of feeling that your self-image comes chiefly from human activities without consideration of God's will or at the price of forgetting about God altogether, you are in danger of breaking the First Commandment.

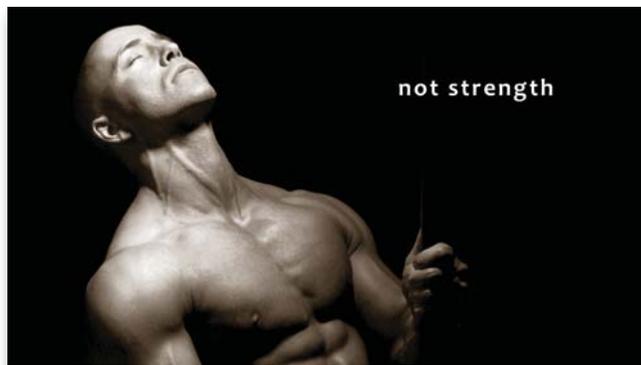
Has there been another temptation which has had the same allure as power? For many, the earliest memories as children are of older or larger kids bullying them. Unfortunately, those who are abused by the inappropriate exercise of

power as children often turn around later in life to do the same thing to the weaker people around them. Nor is the abuse of power limited to certain types of families or to certain kinds of neighborhoods. Power is abused everywhere. It is abused with weapons and muscle. It is abused with money, and it is even abused with love. All too frequently power is abused by people in authority. Abuse can originate with a misguided parent toward a child or from one parent to the other in the child's presence. Teachers and even elected officials can abuse power with both children and adults. Arrogance is an expression of power, and arrogance is not limited to older adults,



but can be found in school hallways as well as in the family room or kitchen. The temptation to abuse power is dangerous beyond description. Yet, when power is exercised with grace and compassion in keeping with God's will, it is the source of untold blessings.

You have come to the oldest temptation of all. Who has not dreamed of being admired, perhaps for being pretty or being very strong? Sometimes teens will seek attention by the way they dress or by acting in such a way as to set themselves apart from their parents and from other less daring kids at school. The very first temptation in Genesis, the one that got the best of Adam and Eve, was self-absorption. As you begin to seek identity outside your family and among your peers, the temptations in the realm of self-love are limitless. How very valuable it





would be to have a deeply trusted adult to take into your confidence. But the sad truth is that while your challenges are growing by leaps and bounds, the avenues for effective communication with trusted adults may seem to be dwindling. Please keep searching! Such a trusted adult is in a position to make substantial contribution to your development of self-respect in place of self-love. Finding someone who will listen without being judgmental is vital. ... And isn't it true that once again you must stand in awe of the love of God for crippled sinners? Even though God gave so much to His children, Adam and Eve traded love of their Creator for love of self and lost the image of God. Immediately, your loving Father promised to send a Savior. What love!



or money

Some families provide so many possessions for their children that wealth becomes an expectation. Money can be viewed as an entitlement. Can you guess what the word "entitlement" means? When resources are too readily available, it is little wonder that God is relegated to a spot near the bottom of priorities. The one who feels s/he has everything has little need for the only One who is truly able to fill human need. Limitless possessions can numb the heart and mind to the real needs a person has. In some families, giving teens possessions becomes a substitution

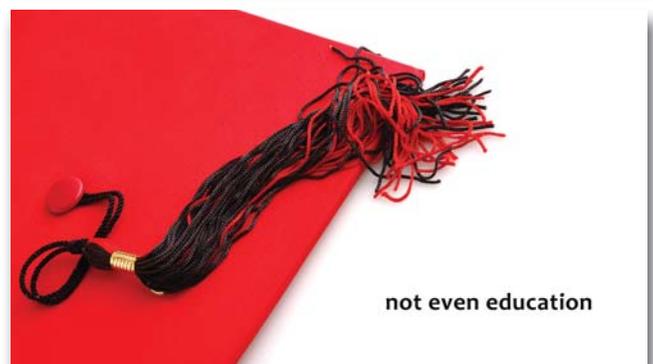
for the greater gifts of love, quality time, listening and genuine concern. On the other hand, when poverty makes even basic necessities impossible to attain, the temptation to label God as uncaring is never far away. Remember, the blueprint shows that life will be best when everyone allows God to be God.

Do you find it much easier to understand power or money as a temptation than it is to see a friend or even education as a danger? Look at the story of Job. He was a very faithful man, a man who trusted God completely. Yet, when Job was suffering, his three friends believed Job had committed a great sin. The friends were incorrect and could have led Job to doubt his faith in God. Job was blessed that he continued to trust the Lord. Job's friends meant well, but they almost led Job astray. Perhaps there is no more serious choice you make than the friends you keep. The right friends can be a wonderful source of joy, and the right friends will encourage your trust in God rather than challenge it.



or friends

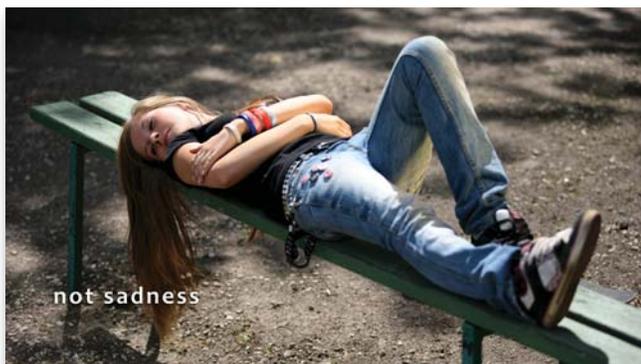
Education, too, can bring fantastic blessing into your lives, but if education leads you to believe that you no longer need the Lord and can trust your own intellect instead, then education has become a treacherous temptation. Isn't it fascinating how the same thing can be either a blessing or a malignancy depending upon your relationship with God? Like King David in the Twenty-third Psalm, you do well to declare,



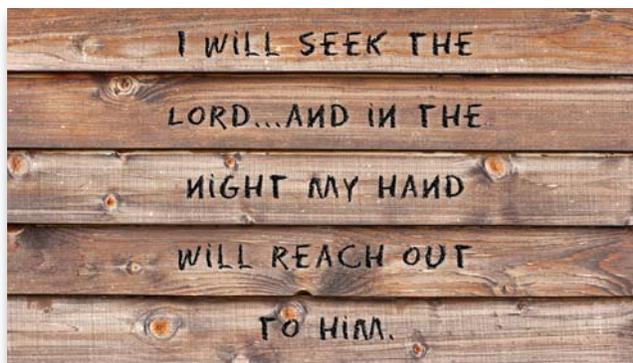
not even education



The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.  
 He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
 He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul.  
 He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.  
 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
 I will fear no evil, for you are with me;  
 your rod and your staff, they comfort me.  
 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.  
 You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.  
 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,  
 and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.



Most of the time your state of mind is pleasing to the Lord. On the other hand, do you think it is possible that sometimes even your emotions could lead you away from God? Do you think God cares about your feelings and even your thinking?



Now you have come to the heart of the First Commandment given by God to His children following the Exodus from Egypt; that is, you never grow too old to reach out in love and trust to your Father in heaven, the God who created you and who sent His Son to redeem you. Early on you were taught to pray simple but meaningful prayers to your Lord, such as, “Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep,” and later, “Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name...” You know all about reaching out to the giving God. When life is troubling and needs are great, you know about the importance of touching the hand of Jesus. Young and old alike pray to the heavenly Father because He has instructed them to do so. He wants you to depend completely upon Him. You continue to look to your parents and guardians as God would have you do, for parents and guardians are gifts from your Creator, but above all, the sovereign God would have His children of all ages look

#### A FLASH STORY: THE WHEELBARROW

Many years ago for what seemed like weeks on end, the newspaper of Niagara Falls, New York wrote of little else than the anticipated arrival in town of a man who proposed to cross the Falls walking on a wire cable while pushing a wheelbarrow. The Barber in town asked all his customers if they believed the man could do what he promised. "I believe he will" was the common response. Without fail the barber said that he likewise believed the man would succeed. When the day finally arrived, people from villages near and far gathered on both sides of Niagara Falls to watch the exciting event. The daredevil arrived in flashy tights pushing a bright green wheelbarrow. Just before he stepped out onto the wire, he shouted over the crowd, "Do you believe in me?" Everyone yelled "YES!" The barber's voice was the strongest of all. The daredevil immediately turned to the barber, surprising him by asking, "Do you believe in me so much you are willing to ride in the wheelbarrow?" On that day the barber learned a great lesson regarding the difference between mere belief and full trust.

Let each and everyone, then, see to it that you esteem this commandment above all things and not make light of it. Search and examine your own heart thoroughly, and you will discover whether or not it clings to God alone.

Martin Luther in the *Large Catechism* , 1529

to Him. He invites your trust. He is the source of everything. But there is an irony to be understood here, as well. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul says God's strength is made perfect in Paul's weakness. Paul means that when he is the weakest, then God is able to make the best use of him as His instrument. Take a look at Acts 9:15-16. Jesus says in Luke 9:24, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it." Try writing a single-page essay entitled "My Greatest Weaknesses."

**"I am the Lord your God,  
who brought you out of  
the land of Egypt, out of  
the house of bondage.  
You shall have no other  
gods before me."**

Exodus 20:2-3  
Deuteronomy 5:6-7

In stipulating the First Commandment, your God reminds you of His rescue of the people from slavery in Egypt, a seminal moment for the children of Israel. While the liberated men, women and children were able to connect the dots between their deliverance from Pharaoh and the sparing of the firstborn sons and daughters on the night the Lord passed over all who dwelt in Egypt, they were not able to see the connection between that night when God passed over them and the death of the Son of God that would follow 1500 years later. But you are able to connect

these dots. Sin is no small thing; it broke the heart of God and it broke the relationship between God and man. The justice of the Holy God required the absolute death of humankind. But "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The blood smeared upon the vertical and horizontal doorposts of the Israelites' homes saved the firstborn children from certain and dreadful death, even as the blood of Christ smeared upon the vertical and horizontal posts of the cross saves you and all believers throughout time from eternal death.

The great Reformer Martin Luther understood and accepted God as the creator of the world and the creator of life itself. For Luther faith turns into action when the believer begins to place his true trust in the Lord God, Almighty. Moreover, your expressions of trust are enjoyed by the Lord. He responds to your prayers, your pleading. Over time you come to realize the depth of His absolute love through His countless blessings. You have only to look back to see His ever-present hand guiding and preserving you. Luther wrote, "I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess." What begins as obedience to the First Commandment quickly turns to trust, and in time such trust evolves into love. You love the Lord because He first loved you! Awesome respect, confident trust and grateful love are the anticipated characteristics of the young adolescent who keeps the First Commandment.

**"We are to trust in God alone...  
for it is He who gives..."**

Martin Luther  
The Large Catechism  
1529

**Reminder to the instructor:**

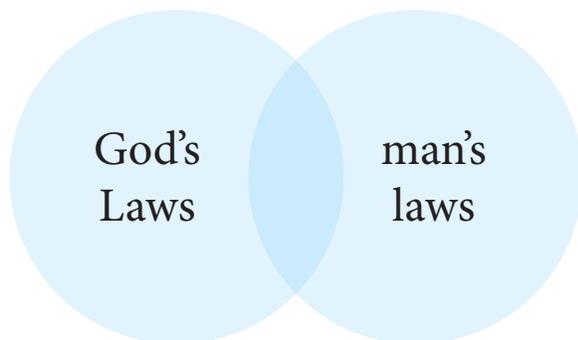
**Images of Faith offers a wide variety of learning activities for you to use with your students to strengthen their learning. Please feel free to select as many or as few of the learning activities as best fits your program of instruction.**

**For questions 6 through 14 in this section, be sensitive to those students who might not come from a loving home life. You may want to consider rephrasing the questions so the students do not feel singled out as being “different.”**

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

### Focus: Rules

1. \*Why do your parents establish rules for you? Do they do so only to exercise authority or are there other reasons? What are some of the rules in your home? Are there any “funny” ones? How do you feel when you break your parents’ rules? How do you think your parents feel? Do you think they feel only anger, or do they also feel hurt or afraid at times? What might your parents fear when you break their rules? What rules will you create for your children some day?
2. Design a Venn diagram showing the similarities and differences between human rules and God’s rules.



Ask the students to list examples of human laws which conform to God’s will where the circles overlap. How much overlap should be depicted?

### Focus: “Fear, Love, and Trust”

3. \*When Martin Luther wrote his explanation for the First Commandment, he used the words “fear, love, and trust.” Today’s synonym for Luther’s word “fear” is respect, or as Webster’s dictionary puts it, “to feel reverential awe.” What traits or characteristics in another person would inspire you to respond to someone with reverential awe? How does reverential awe differ from outright fear or from everyday respect?
4. Try creating a list of three people for whom you might feel outright fear as you understand the word today, three for whom you might have respect, and three for whom you would feel reverential awe (even if you have never met the person in real life). How do the people on the three lists differ? What might be a danger in feeling reverential awe for another human?
5. Luther says that the First Commandment expects you to love God. A very famous French mathematician, Blaise Pascal, once wrote, “Human beings must be known to be loved; but God must be loved to be known.” What do you think Pascal meant? Do you agree with him?
6. Do you know for sure if your parents love you? How do you know? What do they do that demonstrates their love for you? If someone offered your parents one billion dollars for you, would your parents accept the offer? What do you do that demonstrates your love back to your parents?
7. If you do not turn out to be highly successful in life, will you still have a place in your parents’ hearts and home?
8. If you let God down, will you still have a place in His home?
9. Try your hand at explaining the relationship between Romans 6:3-7 with Romans 6:23. Have you ever died? When did that happen? What was the result of your death? Would it be a true statement to say, “I either must die baptismally or I must die eternally”?



10. How does it feel to be loved no matter what? Will God love you no matter what?

**Focus: Trusting God**

11. Write down the names of the people you trust the most. You do not need to show the list to anyone, but be ready to describe what it is about each person(s) that gives you confidence that trust is warranted.
12. Is it easy to trust other people? Why or why not?
13. Imagine yourself as a parent. What would you do to instill trust in your children?
14. \*Can God be fully trusted? Why?

**Focus: Sin & Forgiveness**

15. Does God always forgive when He is asked to do so?
16. Do some sins make God angrier than others? Does God have feelings that can be hurt? Is God a person like you are a person?
17. \*Here is a challenging question for you: what if a believer were to die in a car accident before having the chance to ask God for forgiveness for the sins committed that day? Would the person still go to heaven if s/he had been someone who truly trusted God?
18. \*Here is an even tougher question: does a pastor actually forgive sins on Sunday mornings? Where does the pastor's authority to do so come from? (see Matt. 16:19; John 20:23) Is the pastor a representative of God? In what way are you able to re-present God in your world?

**Focus: Creation**

19. Why do you think Christians around the world believe the story of creation found in the Bible?
20. How do you feel about what is taught about the origin of the universe in your school?
21. \*How do you handle questions or conversation about the beginning of the world? Do you ever feel uncomfortable about such questions around your friends or in class?
22. Why was it brave of Dr. Dean Kenyon to express publicly his new point of view? Do you respect him for doing so?

**Focus: Temptation**

23. What do you like doing the most? What are you the best at doing? What temptations arise when you are very good at doing something? What temptations arise when you are not adept at doing something?
24. Would temptations be greater for an outstanding musician than for a mediocre musician? Why or why not?
25. See if you are able to clarify the difference between admiration and worship. If a friend of yours believes that a particular musician is the best in the world, is your friend in any danger at all of drawing his or her primary identity from the person admired? What would make the difference between thoroughly enjoying a performer without breaking the First Commandment and behaving in such a way as to violate the First Commandment?



26. If one of your friends feels that failure to make the soccer team at school would be the end of the world, how close is your friend to violating God's will? Is there any danger in speaking this way even when it is not truly meant? Explain your thinking.

**Focus: Power—Its Use and Abuse**

27. Look in a newspaper or news magazine. Find a story about power being harmfully exercised.

28. Can you name two people in authority who exercise their power with grace and compassion?

29. How common is bullying in your school? Why do you think bullying is so common in the world today?

30. Debate this statement: The abuse of power is a prime example of original sin.

31. Discuss the ways people (even teenagers) seek to gain power such as through election or physical skills. Consider size, age, intelligence, charisma (the cool factor), knowledge, etc.

32. How do you think God wants you to deal with power and authority?

33. How is the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 a story about power? Who won the power struggle? Explain your thinking.

**Focus: Trust and Power**

34. Whenever you have two people, there is always some sort of a power issue. How do you see this played out between you and your parents? You and your siblings? You and your teacher? How do you and your best friend handle power between you?

35. \*What role did trust play in the Garden of Eden? Did Adam and Eve need to trust that what God gave them was good? Can you explain your answer?

36. What is the relationship between trust and love?

37. Are you able to think of someone else in the Bible who lost sight of the need to trust God and trusted themselves instead?

38. \*Why did God create the First Commandment? Was it for God's sake or yours? If you say it was for your sake, what do you mean? How do you benefit from the First Commandment?

39. What would you list as the essential characteristics for someone you would feel completely free to trust? Do you have such a person in your life?

40. Try your hand at creating a "contract" for life at home. What elements would you like to see included? Is the contract fair to everyone? Does the contract align with the will of God as expressed in the First Commandment?

41. Working in small groups, try to create a list of possessions the car seen in the slide show could symbolize, such as a dirt bike or the latest electronic gear. What is the relative importance of the items on your list?

42. Why is God so insistent that He remain the highest priority in your life?

Please recognize that servant events require not only advance preparation, but also post-activity reflection by the participants to promote growth. Even just a de-briefing of students can assist this reflection, but don't overlook more personal reflection and sharing time as well. Encourage students to investigate using music, poetry, story, art, drama, and graphic design to individually reflect on their experiences and then share with the whole group. Establish events in which parents and other adults can participate, sharing reflections cross-generationally.

## CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

43. \*Watch the video one more time. Design your own final slide that sums up what you've learned in this lesson.
44. In Romans 6 you not only learn that you died in baptism, but that you were also raised to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. What do you think it means to walk in His footsteps? What is the most important first step?
45. With a friend write a "rap" song or a poem about the First Commandment.

## SERVANT EVENT

Participate in a park, wilderness area, or community clean-up. This might be one established by a community organizer or one in which only your group participates. Goal: to appreciate man's role as a caretaker of God creation.

### MEMORY WORK FOR THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:2-3	I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods.
Mark 12:30	And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.
Job 42:2	I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
Psalms 73:25-26	Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart And my portion forever.
Martin Luther	Please memorize the First Commandment and Explanation from <i>Luther's Small Catechism</i> .