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LEADER/MENTOR GUIDE

Living God's Way



Living God's Way





Dedication

Friendship Ministries dedicates this second edition of *Living God's Way* in memory of Meta Shamrock. Meta was one of the authors of the first edition published in 1994 and was instrumental in securing a grant to fund new four-color revisions for this second edition. During her four years as Director of Friendship Groups Canada, Meta coordinated several conferences in Ontario and Alberta, set up a website, and wrote the Friendship Groups Canada newsletter. Meta also established connections with national disability conferences in Canada. We will miss her caring and encouraging personality and her gifts of administration and public speaking.

Acknowledgments

Friendship Ministries is an interdenominational, international ministry for people with cognitive impairments. Through consultation and with the help of resources that encourage spiritual development and relationships, Friendship Ministries helps churches to include people with cognitive impairments in fellowship and service as members of the body of Christ.

Friendship Ministries is grateful to Gwen Penning Genzink for writing this revised version of *Living God's Way*. Gwen has been a Friendship mentor for many years and currently works part-time for Friendship Ministries. She lives with her husband and son in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The biblical backgrounds ("Focusing on God's Word") for this course were written by William Van Dyken, Religious Services Coordinator at Hope Haven in Rock Valley, Iowa. He has also written a number of backgrounds for the Friendship Bible Studies series.

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We are indebted to Meta Shamrock and Rich Telinde and the planning team from the Calgary, Alberta, Friendship program for their work in developing the first edition of *Living God's Way* (1994, CRC Publications).

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Illustrated by Tim Foley

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Introduction

Living God's Way introduces youth and adults to the Ten Commandments. We will focus on the two tables of the law as we learn with our friends how God teaches us to live for him and to get along with others. (The wording of the commandments as suggested below is based on Exodus 20:1-17.)

Love God

1. Do not have any gods except the One true God; trust God alone.
2. Do not make and worship anything else; worship God alone.
3. Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God; speak with respect about God.
4. Remember to set aside a day to honor God; take time to be with God and his people.

Love Others

5. Honor your father and your mother; respect others.
6. Do not murder people; treat people as you want them to treat you.
7. Do not have sexually impure thoughts and actions; remember, our bodies are gifts from God.
8. Do not steal; share with others.
9. Do not tell lies about others; speak the truth in love.
10. Do not be jealous of anything that belongs to others; be content no matter what happens.

LEADER TIP

In some faith traditions, the Ten Commandments are divided a bit differently, but the content is the same. Feel free to modify the session plans to reflect this.

How Is This Course Designed?

Materials for this course include the following components:

- Leader/Mentor Guide (includes session plans for the large group session and the mentoring session)
- Group Leader's Packet (includes visual aids for the large group session)
- Ten four-page take-home papers for youth and adults for sessions 1-10. (Activity sheets for selected sessions are nestled in the center of the set of take-home papers.)

Leader/Mentor Guide

The course begins with an **overview session** that focuses on the two “most important” commandments as summarized by Jesus in Matthew 22:37-39 (love God and love others). The overview is followed by **ten sessions** that look at the Ten Commandments in more detail.

Each of these session plans is divided into four steps:

- Step 1: Praising God Together** (large group gathering and worship)
- Step 2: Learning to Live God's Way** (presentation of Bible story to large group)
- Step 3: Thinking About God's Commandments** (one-on-one review of Bible story)
- Step 4: Obeying God's Commandments** (one-on-one application of lesson truth)

The first two steps in each of the session plans are the responsibility of the group leader; the last two steps are intended to guide the one-on-one mentor. Suggested activities develop the head, heart, and hand goals.

Welcome!, **Get Set!**, and **Wrap Up** sidebars, **Leader Tips**, and **Mentor Helplines** provide additional suggestions for carrying out the session plans.

A **two-part review** gives your group opportunities to tie the Ten Commandments together and to reinforce the two most important commandments. Review activities can be done in a large group session, in smaller groups, or one-on-one.

We suggest that you schedule two review sessions like this:
Part 1: Loving God after session 4 (see p. 50).
Part 2: Loving Others after session 10 (see p. 106).

LEADER TIP

We've also included plans for a **celebration session**. This culminating session is a time for your Friendship group to sing praises, share the Bible stories they've heard, and celebrate God's love with each other, with friends and family, or with your entire congregation.

In the back of the Leader/Mentor Guide, you'll find

- words and music for seven songs suggested in the session plans, along with signing directions or motions for key words in several of the songs. (Two additional songs are included in the take-home papers.)
- directions for signing "Love God" and "Love Others."
- photocopyable patterns for story visuals and activities.
- other reproducible materials, including litanies and directions for the paper batik project suggested in the review session.

The back cover of this guide can serve as a visual of the two tablets of the law along with a list of the Ten Commandments. The back cover also features Jesus' summary of the law from Matthew 22:37-39.

Group Leader's Packet

A variety of visual aids (story figures, posters, and so on) are included in a packet for the group leaders. These materials will be used for the group session activities (steps 1 and 2).

Take-Home Papers

A set of ten take-home papers is designed to be used during the one-on-one mentoring time for sessions 1-10. The four-page papers usually contain the weekly Bible story, simply told and colorfully illustrated. Each paper also includes activities that reflect life situations appropriate for both youth and adults. Cardstock visuals of the two tablets of the law and other activity sheets are inserted into the middle of the bundled set of papers.

LEADER TIP

When you order your materials, you'll need

- one Leader/Mentor Guide for the group leader(s) and one for each mentor.
- one Group Leader's Packet for the group leader and one for mentors if they prefer to have their own set of story visuals, posters, and so on for the group session and mentoring session. (Friends with visual impairments and those who have difficulty focusing on the story may benefit from this.)
- one set of ten take-home papers (with activity sheets) for each mentor and friend.

Here's a suggested schedule for a 60-90 minute session:

10-15 minutes	Conversation, getting settled, welcome, announcements
20-30 minutes	Group Session for Youth and Adults Step 1: Praising God Together Step 2: Learning to Live God's Way
20-30 minutes	One-on-One Mentoring Session Step 3: Thinking About God's Commandments Step 4: Obeying God's Commandments
10-15 minutes	Social time with refreshments and fellowship

Singing

Throughout the session plans, we've suggested several songs that are relevant to the Bible story and focus of the sessions. You'll find words and music for seven suggested songs in the back of this Leader/Mentor guide along with signing directions or motions for some of the words.

We encourage you to choose other songs that are favorites of your group. Choose songs

- with repetitive phrases.
- with easy-to-learn, catchy tunes.
- that are regularly sung in congregational worship in the churches your friends attend.

Consider adding rhythm instruments and signing for friends who are nonverbal. Draw on the gifts of your group members to sing solo parts and to lead the worship time.

Prayer

As we've watched our friends grow spiritually over the years, we've marveled at their desire to praise God through prayer and to bring the needs of others to Jesus. Be creative when planning for this part of your praise and worship time. You might

- lay prayer card requests on an empty chair.
- list requests on a prayer board.
- make prayer chains with words and drawings to illustrate praise and petition.

- follow the “ACTS” prayer model: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication.
- celebrate answered prayers with balloons, photos, and other visual reminders.
- share prayer requests with the larger church family through bulletin announcements, phone calls, notes in mailboxes, and so on.
- use signing and movement to express praise and thanksgiving.

LEADER TIP

Looking for other ideas for your praise and worship time? Check the Friendship Bible Studies units for songs, prayers, and other activities that you can adapt for this course. You'll find a list of these materials at www.Friendship.org.



It is our prayer that as you and your friends live out God's rules for your lives you will experience anew God's love and faithfulness.

OVERVIEW SESSION

God Teaches Us How to Live

Bible Story: Moses on Mount Sinai

Scripture

Exodus 20:1-17; 31:18; Matthew 22:37-39

Key Biblical Truth

Because God loves us, God teaches us to live for him and to get along well with others.

Session Goals

Friends and mentors will

J realize that God wants us to love him and others.

 praise God for loving us so much.

 show love to God and others in one specific way during the coming week.

Materials for Group Session

- Nametags and other supplies for welcome (see Welcome sidebar, p. 12)
- Music or CD of favorite praise songs
- CD player
- Robe and sandals for Moses
- Photocopy of story script (pp. 14-15) for Moses
- Drum and trumpet for sound effects (if these aren't available, improvise with your voice)
- Wood or cardboard for tablets (see Leader Tip below)
- Headings for two tablets of the law (Group Leader's Packet)
- Self-adhesive Velcro circles
- NIV Bibles for Moses and group leader

LEADER TIP

Enlist the help of a woodworker in your congregation to make two tablets from wood, or cut them out from heavy cardboard. We suggest making each tablet about 24 x 30 (60 cm x 75 cm). Tablet 1 will hold the heading "Love God" and four commandment strips; Tablet 2 will hold the heading "Love Others" and six commandment strips. For this session, attach adhesive Velcro circles to each end of the two headings and to the two tablets where you will place the headings. You'll add the commandment strips as each one is introduced in sessions 1-10.

Focusing on God's Word

Jesus' words in Matthew 22:37-39 teach us that when we love God with our entire self, we must also love our neighbor as ourselves. These two commands are a guideline for living healthy, happy lives. Keeping these commands is the core response we give to God's gracious, loving gift of salvation in his Son, Jesus. These two commands in Matthew are inseparable. We cannot love God without loving others, and we cannot truly love others without loving God.

Jesus' summary of the law is based on the list of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17 as given to Moses and the Israelites (see also Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:5). In this course on the commandments, four sessions focus on loving God and six sessions focus on loving others. (In some faith traditions, the Ten Commandments are divided a bit differently, but the content is the same.)

Historically, the law has been seen from three different perspectives, as outlined below. In this course we will focus primarily on the third purpose of the law: the call for our positive response of gratitude for God's gift of salvation in Jesus.

The Ten Commandments Teach Us About Sin

When we read the Ten Commandments and then reflect on our own thoughts, words, and actions, we discover how far short we fall from loving God and others as God commands. Paul wrote in Romans 3:23, *"Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory."* When Paul discusses the role of the law he writes, *"... It can't be said that anyone will be made right with God by obeying the law. Not at all! The law makes us more aware of our sin"* (v. 20). Although the law Paul refers to here is not just the Ten Commandments, the Word of God tells us we are all sinners in need of a Savior.

The Ten Commandments Give Us a Guideline for a Wholesome Moral Life

Because God loves us so much, God wants us to have a life that is good in every way. The commandments serve as a moral compass. James 2:8 says, *"The royal law is found in Scripture. It says, 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' If you really keep that law, you are doing what is right."* In this sense, the law can be a guideline for everyone, not just for those who love God. Keeping the law brings neighborly peace.

The Ten Commandments Call for a Response of Gratitude

Because we are saved through God's gracious gift of his Son, we want to respond to God thankfully, joyfully, wholeheartedly, and willingly with all our being. Psalm 119:14 says, "Following your covenant laws gives me joy just as great riches give joy to others." Loving God and loving others is meant to be an expression of thankfulness and appreciation of God's great love and mercy toward us. In this way, we can be filled with love and live a life of gratitude with the Holy Spirit's help.

DELIGHT

*Blessed are those who obey the law of the Lord.
They don't follow the advice of evil people.
They don't make a habit of doing what sinners do.
They don't join those who make fun of the Lord and his law.
Instead, they take delight in the law of the Lord.*

—Psalm 1:1-2

Group Session for Youth and Adults (STEPS 1 & 2)

Welcome!

Especially if this is your first session for the season, make everyone feel at home with

- nametags. (Heart-shaped or tablet-shaped nametags will help introduce the concepts of God's love or God's rules. You'll find patterns for both on p. 133.)
- greeters. (Mentors should also be ready to welcome their friends.)
- something to capture attention. (To encourage conversation, you might have a display of pictures of your group in action. To raise curiosity about today's story, you could display a robe and sandals, a shepherd's stick, a sheepskin, or other items.)

As you gather in your meeting place, allow a few minutes for introductions and announcements.

STEP 1: Praising God Together

To begin your praise time, sing some of your group's favorite songs, especially those that talk about God's love for us. Then introduce "This Is My Commandment" (p. 123), the theme song for this course. Sing and sign both stanzas.

Follow your praise time with group prayer time. Conclude by singing "Change My Heart, O God" (p. 124), and make this song a regular

part of your prayer routine during this course. Friends who are nonverbal can participate by crossing their hands over their hearts.

LEADER TIP

The Introduction offers suggestions for singing and prayer time on pages 7-8. For this first session, stick to familiar routines, and introduce only one or two new things.

STEP 2: Learning to Live God's Way

Our Bible story for this overview session will be told by someone playing the part of Moses. The story recalls the time when God gave his people—and us—rules to help us live as God wants us to. The story will emphasize that we are commanded to **love God** and **love others**.

Sessions 1-10 will tell us how we can keep these rules.

LEADER TIP

It is our hope that every friend will be able to know and say or sign the two “most important” commandments as Jesus talked about them in Matthew 22:37-39 and as they're pictured on the tablets on the back cover of this guide. As you teach about these commandments, some friends may be able to recite a brief version of the Ten Commandments or Jesus' summary of the commandments (see back cover), but we'll leave that for later sessions.

Get Set!

To set the stage for the story,

- provide for Moses a robe and sandals, an NIV Bible, a copy of the story script, and the two tablets you've prepared (see Leader Tip, p. 11). Place the tablets where Moses can reach them as the story unfolds.
- arrange for a drummer and trumpeter to add sound effects as the passage from Exodus 19 is read (see script on pp. 14-15). If this isn't possible, ask someone to do a drum roll on a table and make trumpeting sounds when appropriate.
- introduce your guest by name, and explain that he is pretending to be Moses.
- ask the group to recall what they remember about Moses.

The story follows:

Hello, everyone! That's right—I'm Moses, the one God chose to lead his people out of Egypt. Years ago when I was caring for my father-in-law's sheep I never imagined that I would one day beg Pharaoh **(kneel, speak pleadingly)** over and over, "Let my people go!"

God answered my plea and the cry of his people. **(Rise slowly.)** One day Pharaoh let the people go. Now they would no longer be slaves. Now our mighty God would lead us to Canaan, the land he had promised us.

It was an amazing journey! Soon we came to the Red Sea. **(Speak fast and fearfully.)** As we set up camp, we saw Pharaoh and his horses and chariots coming after us! Already the people began to grumble, "Why did you bring us here to die? It would be better if we were slaves in Egypt!"

But our mighty and loving God had other plans. Before our very eyes, God parted the Red Sea! **(Stretch arms wide; walk in place.)** We walked through on dry land. When Pharaoh and his men tried to chase us, God sent the waters of the sea rushing over them.

We sang praises to the Lord! **(Chant this song of praise from Exodus 15:2, 13):**

The Lord gives me strength. I sing about him. He has saved me. He is my God. I will praise him. . . . Because your love is faithful, [Lord,] you will lead the people you have set free.

As I led the people away from the Red Sea, I knew God loved his people very much. I knew he would take care of us. And he did. God gave us water to drink and manna to eat in the desert. And just three months after we left Egypt, God gave us rules to tell us how to live good lives for him. It happened like this . . . **(step closer to the group)**

We were camped in front of Mount Sinai. When I went up the mountain **(walk to one side)**, God said to me, "Tell the people, 'You have seen how I cared for you. Now you must obey me. Then you will be my special treasure.'"

(Move closer to the group again.) I went down the mountain and told the people what God had said. Then I told them to get ready to see God come down on the mountain. What happened next is written in God's Word **(read this passage from Exodus 19:16-18 in the NIV Bible, pausing for a drum roll and trumpet blast):**

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning. A thick cloud covered the mountain. A trumpet gave out a very loud blast. Everyone in the camp trembled with fear. . . . Smoke covered Mount Sinai, because the Lord came down on it in fire. . . . The whole mountain trembled and shook.

(Shudder.) I was shaking too! God asked me to come to the top of mountain. **(Move to the side again; kneel with hands lifted in awe.)** Then God spoke these words **(from Exodus 20:2, 5-6)**:

“I am the Lord your God. I brought you out of Egypt. . . . I punish . . . those who hate me. But for all time to come I show love to all those who love me and keep my commandments.”

(Stand; move closer to group again.) When God finished speaking to me, he gave me two tablets. **(Hold up the two tablets.)** They were made of stone. The words on them were written by God. **(Trace the words on each tablet with your index finger.)** This is what God wrote **(say and sign)**:

- Love God.
- Love Others.

It sounds so simple—just love God and one another. But it’s hard to do, isn’t it? **(Hold up Bible.)** So God teaches us over and over again in his Word how to keep his commandments. And God forgives us over and over again when we admit that we have sinned. I know—I’ve seen God forgive the stubborn Israelites—and me! **(Point to self.)** And I know our mighty God loves us all! **(Point up; cross hands over heart.)**

Wrap Up

To reinforce the key truths in the story,

- hold up the two tablets and have the group tell you what the headings say. (You’ll find signing for these words on p. 123).
- read Jesus’ summary of the commandments from Matthew 22:37-39 (words on back cover; signing for key words on p. 87).
- sing “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (p. 125), and make this prayer song a part of your closing routine in every session.

Optional Way to Tell the Story

Set the stage by having the group recall what they know about Moses. Then have them sing “Go Down, Moses,” a song we introduced in Unit 4 of the *God, Our Father* Friendship Bible Studies. Ask one of your youth to sing the old favorite “How Did Moses Cross the Red Sea?” Then read the script beginning at page 14 with these words:

“As I led the people away from the Red Sea. . . .” (Change *I* to *Moses* throughout, so that the story is told in the third person.) Wrap up as suggested above.

Mentoring Session for Youth and Adults **(STEPS 3 & 4)**

Scripture

Exodus 20:1-17; 31:18; Matthew 22:37-39

Materials for Mentoring Session

- Two tablets (activity sheets for overview session)
- Drawing paper (optional)
- Colored pencils
- NIV Bible
- Highlighter
- Large notecards

Mentor Helpline

Although there is no take-home paper for this session, you'll need the two activity sheets (one for you and one for your friend) that are bundled with the set of ten take-home papers. Encourage your friend to bring a Bible each time.

STEP 3: Thinking About God's Commandments

Questions/Discussion Starters

To guide your review of the story, use the following questions (listed in order of increasing difficulty):

- Did God choose Moses to lead the people out of Egypt?
- Did God part the waters of the Red Sea so the people could walk through on dry ground?
- Did God give the people water to drink and food to eat in the desert?
- Did God give the people—and us—commandments to help us live for him?
- Show or tell what happened when God came down to the top of the mountain.
- Say or sign (see p. 123) the two “most important” commandments God gave us. **(Give the tablets to your friend to hold, then together trace the words with your fingers).**
- Think of one way you can love God.
- Think of one way you can love others.

If your friend is nonverbal, offer drawing paper and colored pencils, and help her draw a picture to answer the last two questions. Or save these questions until you do the activity in step 4 (p. 17).

Memory Challenge

Help your friend find Matthew 22:37-39 in his Bible and highlight these verses. Read them aloud; then summarize by repeating just the two words on each tablet again:

- Love God.
- Love Others.

STEP 4: Obeying God's Commandments

To help your friend focus on one tablet at a time, lay the second one aside for now. Emphasize that the first rule God gave us is that we must love him. With your friend, think of one specific way each of you can show your love for God this coming week. Here are some suggestions:

- Spend time each day praying (talking) to God.
- Sing or listen to songs of praise before going to bed each night.
- Read or listen to verses from God's Word each day.
- Attend church on Sunday morning.
- Enjoy God's creation. Take a walk, listen to the birds, hold a baby, watch a sunset.

When you've each decided on one idea, draw a picture of the activity on a notecard. Help your friend if she is unable to draw by herself. (Stick figures are fine!)

Then focus on the second tablet. Remind your friend that the second "important commandment" is to love others. With your friend, think of one specific way each of you can show your love for others this coming week. Here are some suggestions:

- Give a card or small gift to someone who is lonely.
- Bake a pan of cookies, and share them with a friend over coffee or a soda.
- Clear the table or wash the dishes even though it isn't your turn.
- Carry someone's groceries or open a door for someone in a wheelchair.
- Show or tell someone that you love him or her.
- Lend a friend or family member your favorite CD or video.
- Share a smile or hug.
- Listen to someone tell about his or her day.

Again, when you've each settled on one way to show love to others, draw a picture of the activity on another notecard. Place both cards in your Bibles as a reminder to obey God in these two specific ways. Plan to share what happened next time you meet. You're bound to feel the joy of keeping God's rules!

Mentor Helpline

You'll want to save the two tablets to use throughout this course. Explain that your friend will be able to take them home at the end of the course. If you think your friend will insist on taking them home, make a photocopy on cardstock to use during the sessions.

Mentor Helpline

Perhaps one of the most effective ways you can show love to your friend is to team up with her as you show love for God and others together. It's a great way to hold each other accountable and to spend time getting to know each other better. Plan ahead how you might do this, and then present your ideas to your friend as an option.

SESSION I

Loving God: Trusting God Alone

The First Commandment

Do not have any gods except the one true God; trust God alone.

Bible Story: Gideon

Scripture

Judges 6:1-10, 15; 7:1-25; 8:28

Key Biblical Truth

God blesses those who trust the one true God.

Session Goals

Friends and mentors will

J tell how God kept his promise to save his people from the Midianites.

 thank God that we can trust him.

 remember to trust God alone, no matter what happens.

Materials for Group Session

- Nametags (from overview session)
- Two tablets (from overview session)
- CD *Jesus, Our Savior*; CD player (optional—see Leader Tip on p. 122)
- Trumpets (four or more from pattern on p. 134)
- Cardboard for trumpets, utility knife
- Aluminum foil for trumpets (optional)
- Plastic water bottles (four or more)
- Small flashlights (four or more)
- Simple costume for Gideon
- Photocopy of story script (pp. 21-22)

- Story posters (from Group Leader’s Packet. Poster 2 is on the back of poster 1.)
- NIrV Bible for Gideon
- First commandment strip (Group Leader’s Packet—see Leader Tip for assembly)
- Self-adhesive Velcro circles

Focusing on God’s Word

The first commandment, like all of the other nine commandments, was meant as a guideline for God’s people to live healthy, happy lives. God saved his people, Israel, by delivering them from the hands of Pharaoh. Then God asked them to *live* as his people. When we trust, worship, and honor God alone, life goes much better. But even when God’s people do not put him first and foremost, God’s love for them still remains.

When we read biblical history we often find a pattern of people’s failures, the resulting problems, the people’s cries for help, God’s listening ear, his compassion and response through unlikely means, and the peace that follows. This narrative in the book of Judges follows this same pattern. When God’s people no longer put God first and foremost, trusting and loving him alone, evil takes hold. But even then, this story reminds us of God’s ongoing love and mercy for his people.

Trust Is Broken

Despite the warnings and cautions given by God through his prophets (Judges 6:10), the people of Israel worshiped the gods of the Amorites. So God allows Israel to be invaded by a neighboring people, the Midianites. They’re a numerous and destructive enemy. Their army overpowers the Israelites, who flee to the hills for safety. The Midianites destroy the Israelites’ crops, leaving them in a desperate situation. The people then cry out to God in agony. For seven years this cycle repeats itself, making life unbearably difficult.

Trust Is Reborn

To prove to his people that God and God alone saves them, God uses unlikely means. God chooses a leader by the name of Gideon from the tribe of Manasseh, a man who proclaims *“My family group is the weakest in the tribe of Manasseh. And I’m the least important member of my family”* (v. 15). This shows yet another biblical pattern: God uses people who are perceived to be weak to bring about his purposes and to show that he is the one who saves his people.

So Gideon is chosen as leader. But later, when the warriors are picked to do battle, God shrinks the Israelite army from 22,000 to 300 men. In the end, it is 300 Israelites against 135,000 Midianites, a ridiculously outlandish military maneuver. Again, it’s a God-given reminder: *“I do not want Israel to brag that their own strength has saved them”* (7:2).

God reminds Israel that the numbers do not matter; the victory would be theirs because of God’s intervention. Trust is reborn and restored

in the Lord God of Israel. Everyone sees that God and God alone loves and saves his people.

Trust Is Restored

Because the people of Israel put God first and foremost in their lives once again, peace enveloped the land and its people for forty years. The Midianites were defeated and no longer invaded the land. The people were no longer in agony. This same pattern of trust broken, trust reborn, and trust restored is found in one historical account after another in God's Word. This is a testament to God's patience and love for his people. This story also reminds each of us how God's gift of his Son, Jesus, restores every one of us to a right relationship with him. What does God ask of us in return? To love him and him alone, and to love others as ourselves.

CHOSEN

"[God] chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the things . . . that are . . . looked down on. . . . Because of what God has done, you belong to Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:27-30). Pray that your friends, some of whom may feel unimportant or looked down on, may know that they are God's chosen. Give thanks when you see how God is using them to make a difference.

Group Session for Youth and Adults (STEPS 1 & 2)

Welcome!

To create a sense of belonging and familiarity, provide

- nametags from the overview session
- a display of the two tablets introduced in the overview session.

Allow time for everyone to greet each other, and then call the group together with your theme song "This Is My Commandment." (If you have the song on CD, you can play the melody with accompaniment. Or invite someone to play piano or guitar.)

STEP 1: Praising God Together

Remind the group that "This Is My Commandment" (p. 123) will be your theme song as you learn about the rules God gave us to help us live for him. Sing and sign it together, and then sing some of your group's favorite songs. Invite friends to help lead this time of praise as they sign, sing a solo, or clap to the beat.

A fitting song for today's story is "Step by Step" (p. 126). Introduce it as a praise song and a promise to our great God, the only one we can always trust. We've included signing for key words, but you can

also use simple motions such as hands lifted in praise and walking in place.

Follow your praise time with group prayer time, including a prayer of thanks that we can trust God. Conclude by singing and signing “Change My Heart, O God” (p. 124).

STEP 2: Learning to Live God’s Way

Get Set!

To set the stage for the story,

- make trumpets by tracing the pattern on page 134 onto stiff cardboard; cut out with a utility knife. If you wish, cover the trumpets with aluminum foil. (If your group is large you may want more than three volunteers to play the part of Gideon’s army. See script on pp. 21-22.)
- collect small flashlights and empty water bottles or gallon milk containers.
- invite someone to play the part of Gideon and provide a simple costume, a Bible, two story posters, and a copy of the story script.
- prepare the first commandment strip as directed in the Group Leader’s Packet.

As you hold up the two tablets, ask the group to recall last week’s story and to recite and sign the two “most important” commandments God gave to Moses and his people. Invite the group to listen as your guest tells them about one way to love the one true God.

The story follows:

Hello, my name is Gideon, and I am an Israelite. When God led my people out of Egypt he gave us two “most important” rules to live by. **(Hold up tablets.)** God’s people promised to obey these rules, but it didn’t take long before we forgot the wonderful things God had done for us. Instead, we began to worship *other* gods and to do evil things. Because of this, God allowed the Midianites—our neighbors—to treat us very badly.

(Hold up poster 1 and show it to the group as you speak.) Every year we planted our crops. But as soon as the crops began to grow, the Midianites attacked us and destroyed our crops—and even killed our sheep and cows! We had to hide in caves in the mountains to avoid being killed ourselves. We were hungry and poor—and this misery went on for *seven* years! **(Hold up seven fingers.)**

Finally my people remembered God, and we cried, "Save us, Lord!" **(Lift hands and look up pleadingly.)** God spoke through a prophet and said **(read Judges 6:7-10 from an NIV Bible):**

I brought you up out of Egypt. That is the land where you were slaves. I saved you from the power of Egypt. I saved you from all those who were beating you down. . . . I said to you, "I am the Lord your God. . . . Do not worship [other] gods." But you have not listened to me.

God was angry, but he did not abandon us. No, God kept his promise to save us!

God came to me and said, "Gideon! I am choosing you to save Israel from the power of the Midianites. Go!"

When I heard this, I didn't think it was a very good idea. I am not a mighty warrior. I'm just an ordinary person like everyone here. I said, "But Lord, how can I possibly save Israel? My family is the weakest in the tribe. And I'm the least important member of my family."

God promised, "I will be with you." And even though I was still afraid, I knew I could trust the one true God to keep his promise.

Like a good warrior, I gathered *thousands* of Israelites to fight with me. But twice God said, "Gideon, your army is too big." God didn't want us to brag that we could win by our own strength. *God* would give us the victory.

Finally, with an army of just 300 men, I set out to fight the entire army of the Midianites. There were so many Midianites that we couldn't even count them! **(Ask for three or more friends and their mentors to act the part of your soldiers.)** I gave each of my men three things:

- a trumpet **(give paper trumpet to each volunteer)**
- a jar **(give each volunteer a plastic water or milk container)**
- a torch **(give each volunteer a flashlight)**

After dark, we quietly surrounded the Midianite army. When I gave the men the sign, we blew our trumpets **(prompt volunteers to blow trumpets)**. We threw our jars to the ground **(prompt volunteers to drop plastic containers)**. And we held our torches high, shouting, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" **(Prompt volunteers to wave flashlights high.)**

I'll never forget what happened! **(Turn poster 1 over to show poster 2; hold it up.)** The entire army of Midianites was so afraid that they ran away screaming. What a sight! What a victory!

We knew that it was not our own power that had saved us; it was God! We learned that we must trust God alone. Because my people loved the one true God once again, we had peace in our land for forty years.

Wrap Up

To reinforce the key truths in the story,

- hold up the “Love God” tablet and ask a volunteer to attach the first commandment. Read it together and talk about how the Israelites learned to follow it.
- ask the group to list times when our great God teaches us to trust him (when we are sick, when a family member dies, when people make fun of us, and so on).
- invite the group to sing “Step by Step” (p. 126) as their promise to trust and follow the one true God.
- close by singing the prayer song “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (p. 125).

Optional Way to Tell the Story

Tell the story as a third-person narration centered on the two story posters. Open the story by saying that when God’s people forgot to obey his rules and trust in him, bad things happened.

Display the first poster and tell the story through the words of Judges 6:7-10. Wonder how God would save his people from the Midianites, and give the group time to suggest several ideas. Then tell the rest of the story in the third person, changing *I/me* to *Gideon*.

Instead of asking for volunteers, create the sound effects yourself: blow a trumpet (or making a trumpeting sound with your voice), break a glass jar (inserted in a plastic bag to collect pieces), and wave a flashlight high as you shout, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!” Ask the group what they think happened when Gideon’s little army took on the Midianites, and listen to their responses.

Then show the second poster and marvel how our great God saved his people. Emphasize that God brought peace to their land because they trusted him, the one true God.

Wrap up by asking a friend or mentor (with whom you’ve discussed this in advance) to attach the first commandment to the “Love God” tablet and to share a story from her own life that illustrates how God kept his promises and how she learned to trust in God alone.

Mentoring Session for Youth and Adults **(STEPS 3 & 4)**

Scripture

Judges 6:1-10, 15; 7:1-25; 8:28

Materials for Mentoring Session

- Take-home paper for session 1 (one copy for each friend)
- Pencil, pen, and/or markers
- Two tablets (activity sheets from overview session)
- Strip for first commandment (activity sheet for sessions 1-10)
- Glue sticks

Mentor Helpline

When deciding how to review the Bible story, consider your friend's abilities. Ask simple questions first, then try more difficult ones.

If your friend is nonverbal, learn how she communicates "yes" and "no" and phrase all questions as yes/no questions. She may also use sign language or point to the pictures to answer questions.

If your friend has limited use of his hands, use the hand-over-hand technique to help with drawing and writing activities.

If your friend is visually impaired, augment projects with textured materials wherever possible. Role-play scenarios pictured in the take-home papers.

STEP 3: Thinking About God's Commandments

Questions/Discussion Starters

To guide your review of the story, use the following questions (listed in order of increasing difficulty) and refer to the illustrated story of Gideon on pages 2 and 3 of the take-home paper.

- Did God's people worship other gods?
- Did they forget to trust the one true God?
- Was God angry with his people?
- Did God still love them, even when they disobeyed?
- What happened when God's people forgot to trust him?
- Whom did God send to rescue them?
- How many men did God say Gideon could take to fight the Midianites?
- Who gave Gideon the victory over the Midianites?
- What happened when God's people trusted him once again?
- How can you love the one true God and trust him alone?

Memory Challenge

Fold the take-home paper over so that page 4 is visible. Read the passage from Matthew 22:37-39 together and then summarize by saying and signing (directions on p. 123) the headings on the two tablets:

- Love God
- Love Others

Lay the "Love Others" tablet aside, and give your friend the first commandment strip and a glue stick. Remind her that today's story taught us one way to love God. As you glue the strip to the "Love God" tablet, read the commandment, paraphrased from Exodus 20:3:

"Do not have any gods except the one true God; trust God alone."

STEP 4: Obeying God's Commandments

Together with your friend, think of times when you trusted God or will need to trust God for something. Invite your friend to write a few words or draw a picture to describe these times in the boxes on page 4. You might share times when

- a loved one was sick.
- a close friend died in an accident.
- you were lonely or afraid.
- everything was/is going wrong at school or at work.

Remind your friend that when God's people trusted him to rescue them from the Midianites, God blessed them with peace. Sit quietly for a moment, and sense God's peace. In a soft voice, thank God for keeping his promises and ask God to forgive you both when you fail to trust as you should.

Then sing together "Step by Step" from page 1 of the take-home paper. (If you and your friend aren't great singers, read the words as you clap to the beat, lift your hands in praise, or walk in place.) Make this your promise to trust God in the next week. Suggest that your friend display this song in her room as a reminder.

Step by Step



O God, you are my God, and I will ev-er praise



you. O God, you are my God, and



I will ev-er praise you. I will seek you in the morn-



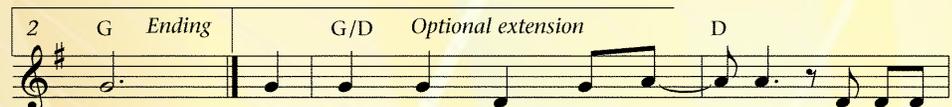
- ing, and I will learn to walk in your ways. And



step by step you'll lead me, and I will



fol-low you all of my days. O



days. And step by step you'll lead me, and I will



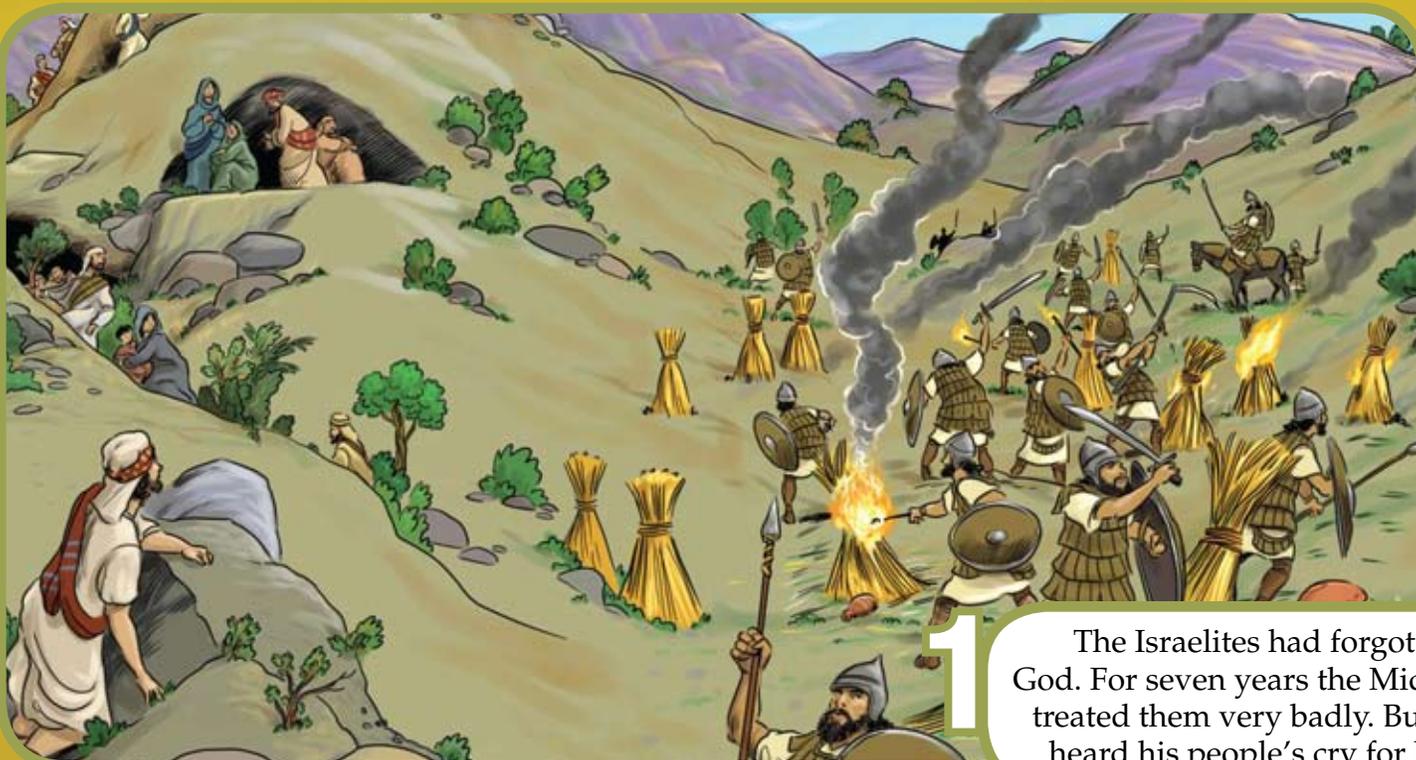
fol-low you all of my days.

Words and Music: David Strasser

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Gideon and the Israelites Learn to Trust God Alone

Judges 6:1-10, 15; 7:1-25; 8:28



1

The Israelites had forgotten God. For seven years the Midianites treated them very badly. But God heard his people's cry for help.



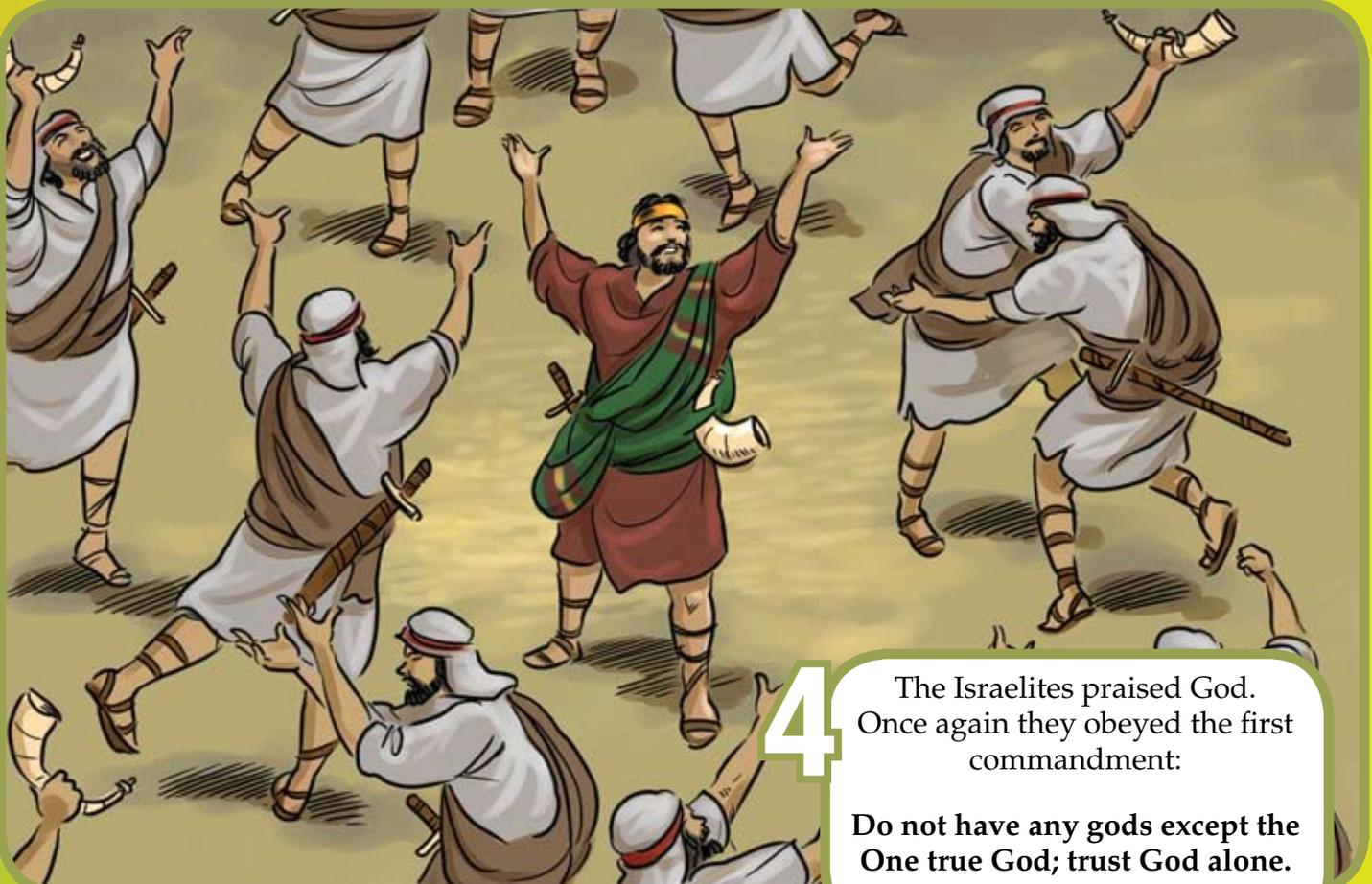
2

God chose Gideon to help his people. Gideon said, "I'm not a strong warrior, but I will trust God to keep his promise."



3

Gideon and his 300 soldiers defeated the army of the Midianites without raising their swords.



4

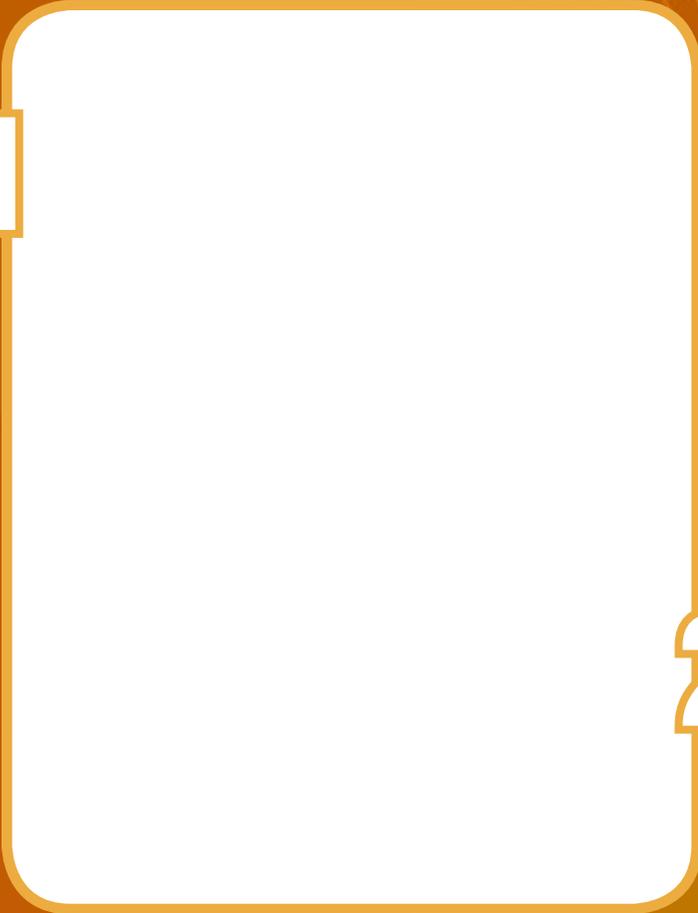
The Israelites praised God. Once again they obeyed the first commandment:

Do not have any gods except the One true God; trust God alone.

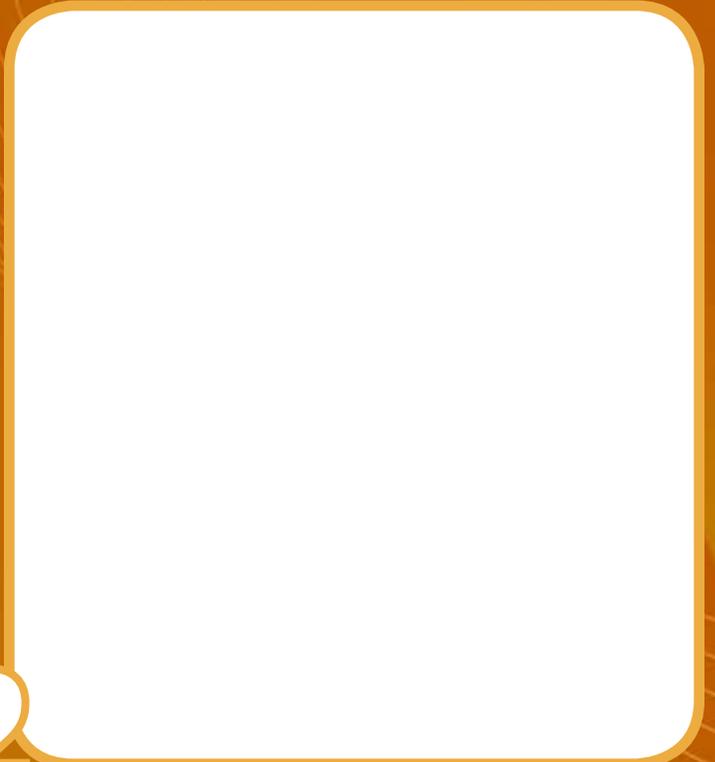
—paraphrased from Exodus 20:3, NIV

I Can Trust God Alone When...

1



2



**“Love the Lord your God
with all your heart and with
all your soul. Love him with
all your mind. . . . Love your
neighbor as you love yourself.”**

—Matthew 22:37-39, NIV

3

