



YOUTH STUDY

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LEADER'S GUIDE
Session 6

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath reminds us what is truly important

Introduction to the Session

Coveting

In biblical tradition, coveting is understood as both an attitude of craving and the forceful action to secure what is craved. The tenth commandment warns against the greed that motivates individuals to crave that which belongs to their neighbors and the lengths to which some are willing to go to take what is not rightfully theirs.

The specifics of such community-destroying greed include “house and wife.” In a patriarchal society, one’s wife was understood to be property, as was the house. Beyond house and wife, the commandment also concerns the householder’s “means of production,” that is: slaves, ox, and donkey. After specifically naming these named objects—house, wife, means of production—the commandment ends with a conclusion so sweeping that nothing is exempt from the rule: “everything that belongs to your neighbor.”

The Neighborhood

It is striking that in this final, very brief commandment, the term *neighbor* occurs three times. It is all about respecting the neighbor and, in doing so, preserving, honoring, and enhancing the neighborhood. It is most

Session at a Glance

ARRIVING

- The tenth commandment

GATHERING

- Reflect on the tenth commandment

OPENING

- Summarize previous week’s session
- Share the goal of the session
- Opening prayer

EXPLORING

- Naboth’s vineyard
- Case study: the Rich Fool

RESPONDING

- Reflecting on how we covet

CLOSING

- Closing prayer

probable that the “neighborhood” of the day was a village of vulnerable peasants, each of whom lived a vulnerable economic existence with no margin for loss. For that reason, any disturbance of property arrangements had the potential of making life in the village unlivable. It follows that Sabbath rest in that context means to protect the space and property of the neighbor from practices motivated by greed and jealousy. The commandment seems to be quite a particular rule concerning the love of neighbor, which Jesus subsequently identified as the second great commandment (Mark 12:31). The neighbor is to be loved as oneself, and the property of the neighbor—his house, wife, means of production—are to be protected even as one wants one’s own house, wife, and means of production to be left undisturbed.

Naboth’s Vineyard

The story in 1 Kings 21:1–29 provides a clear demonstration of the concerns of the tenth commandment. Naboth is a small-time farmer whose land is his “ancestral inheritance” (v. 3). It belongs to his family even as he himself belongs to the land. The relationship of person and land is close and beyond question.

The royal enterprise, by contrast, views all property as a tradable commodity. The royal couple, Ahab and Jezebel, will stop at nothing until they are able to “take possession” (v. 15) of Naboth’s ancestral heritage. In doing so, they destroy not only their neighborly relationship with Naboth but also the sacred connectedness of the neighborhood itself.

The Parable of the Rich Fool

In the parable of Luke 12:13–34, Jesus summarizes “two ways” that are as old as covenant and as poignant as the Naboth narrative. In response to the man in dispute with his brother over the family inheritance, Jesus provides the pivot point of his instruction: “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions” (v. 15).

The greedy man in the parable is a success in his own eyes, but he is destined for death in his self-deceiving foolishness. Jesus draws instruction for his disciples: do not be anxious (v. 22)! Do not worry about commodity goods. It is implied that an acquisitive way of life leaves one in anxiety about not ever having enough and always needing more. Thus discipleship, in this teach-

ing, concerns an alternative kind of life. That alternative is grounded in confidence that God provides what is needed, as energy is redeployed to “strive for his kingdom” (v. 31).

Conclusion

Our consumer society is grounded in the generation of artificial desires and urgent needs. The always-emerging new desires and new needs create a restless striving that sets neighbor against neighbor in order to get ahead, to have an advantage, and to accumulate at the expense of the other. The power of such a compulsion to “get,” of course, negates neighborly possibility.

We are left, then, with the question of how to break the lethal cycle of greed and jealousy. Sabbath is the practical ground for creating a public will for restraint. Sabbath provides time, space, energy, and imagination for coming to the ultimate recognition that more commodities do not satisfy. Sabbath is an antidote to anxiety. Sabbath is an arena in which to recognize that we live by gift and not by possession, that we are satisfied by relationships of loyalty and not by accumulating more possessions. Sabbath is the regular, disciplined, visible, concrete yes to the neighborly reality of the community beloved by God.

Goal for the Session

Participants will explore the idea that Sabbath provides time, space, energy, and imagination to help us see that the things we covet ultimately do not satisfy.

Preparing for the Session

- Read through this Leader’s Guide and determine how to best lead the session given the needs of your group. See the “Teaching Alternative” section at the end for additional ideas.
- Pray for all group members.
- Write out the text to the tenth commandment and post it in your meeting space for the Arriving activity.

Materials Needed

- Bibles
- newsprint
- markers
- pens and paper for each participant
- copies of the Participant Handout

Teaching Tip

If you have had a fairly consistent group throughout this series, consider using the “Teaching Alternative” at the end of this session to review the main idea of each of the six sessions of the series. Ask participants which of the sessions has made the greatest impact on them during this season of Lent.

Arriving (10 minutes)

1. The Tenth Commandment

As participants arrive, have the following posted on the wall in your meeting space so that it is visible for all: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exod. 20:17).

Ask participants to think of a time when they coveted something that belonged to a “neighbor” (friend, classmate, etc.).

Gathering (5 minutes)

2. Reflect on the Tenth Commandment

Reflecting on their experiences of coveting, ask for volunteers to share:

- What is something you have coveted before? (Observe whether most responses are tangible items or something less concrete.)
- How does it feel to covet something?
- How does it affect our relationships with the people who possess what we covet?

At this point in the conversation, ask participants to note how many times the word *neighbor* appears in the tenth commandment. What do they make of this repetition?

Opening (10 minutes)

3. Summarize the Previous Week’s Session

For those who were not present the previous week, ask for a few volunteers to share what was discussed in session 5. Some key points to highlight include:

- While we may equate doing multiple things at once with achieving and acquiring more, the restfulness of Sabbath suffers when we divide ourselves during what is supposed to be a faithful act of worship.

- Worshipers in ancient Israel may have gone through the motions of the Sabbath, but because they did not stop work practices that abused their vulnerable workers, God became angry.
- Jesus also warned his followers against “serving two masters” (God and wealth) at the same time. Multitasking with a divided heart meant no real work stoppage, no interruption in the frantic attempt to get ahead.

4. Share the Goal of the Session

Drawing on material provided in the introduction to the session, share with the group:

- The tenth commandment warns against the greed that motivates individuals to crave that which belongs to their neighbors and the lengths to which some are willing to go to take what is not rightfully theirs.
- It is striking that in this final, very brief commandment, the term *neighbor* occurs three times. It is all about respecting the neighbor and, in doing so, preserving, honoring, and enhancing the neighborhood.
- It follows that Sabbath rest in that context means to protect the space and property of the neighbor from practices motivated by greed and jealousy.
- The neighbor is to be loved as oneself, and the property of the neighbor—his house, wife, means of production—are to be protected even as one wants one’s own house, wife, and means of production to be left undisturbed.

Explain that in today’s session, the group will explore the idea that Sabbath provides time, space, energy, and imagination to help us see that the things we covet ultimately do not satisfy.

5. Opening Prayer

Open your group in prayer, either with your own words or with the following:

God who calls us to love our neighbors,
we are all guilty of coveting that which we do not have.

Help remind us in this time of the two greatest commandments

to which Jesus calls us:

love of God, and love of neighbor.

Through the gift of Sabbath, may we seek these above all else.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Exploring (20 minutes)

6. Naboth's Vineyard

Form smaller groups (at least two) and ask them to read together 1 Kings 21:1–29, the story of Naboth's Vineyard. Ask the small groups to imagine this story in a modern-day context and create a short skit of this story in a contemporary setting. After each group has had time to prepare and present their skits to each other, discuss the following:

- Why did Ahab and Jezebel covet Naboth's vineyard?
- Why was Naboth hesitant to sell it to them?
- How do we see coveting take over in this story?
- How might Sabbath have helped avoid the conflict in this story?

7. Case Study: The Rich Fool

In the Participant Handout, participants will find the story of a modern-day rich fool. After they have had some time to read the story, ask for a volunteer to read Luke 12:13–34 (the parable of the Rich Fool) aloud to the group and discuss the following questions:

- What are the barns we build, and what are the things we store in them?
- How easy is it to find ourselves in the same position as the rich fool?
- Jesus says, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions" (v. 15). How do we live out this advice in our own lives?

Responding (5 minutes)

8. Reflect on How We Covet

In their Participant Handouts, youth will be asked to identify a source of jealousy or greed in their own lives and think about how they can be less anxious about this going forward. They may write their individual responses on their handout and keep these private if they so choose.

Closing (5 minutes)

9. Closing Prayer

Have the group close by praying together the prayer printed in their Participant Handout.

Teaching Alternative

If you have had a consistent group throughout this series, consider going back and briefly reviewing the lessons/topics of each session:

- **Session 1:** The commandment to keep Sabbath can be a faithful response to a culture of anxiety.
- **Session 2:** The Sabbath commandment encourages us to see our fellow human beings as neighbors, not competitors.
- **Session 3:** Sabbath calls us to remember where we have come from in order to help us discern where we are being called to go.
- **Session 4:** Sabbath keeping calls us to a more inclusive way of life.
- **Session 5:** Multitasking keeps us from observing true Sabbath.
- **Session 6:** Sabbath provides time, space, energy, and imagination to help us see that the things we covet ultimately do not satisfy.

Ask participants to name which one of the sessions has had the greatest impact on them and why.

Key Scriptures

1 Kings 21:1–29

Luke 12:13–34

For More Information

Brueggemann, Walter. *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

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