

## New Commands and a New Covenant

*God gives his laws and commandments to free us,  
protect us, and show us his love ...  
not to take away our fun and ruin our lives.*

### Introduction

Every day that we get in a car and drive to work, school, church, the store, or anywhere else, we follow countless rules without even noticing. We respond, almost instinctively, to the "rules of the road."

We drive on the correct side of the road. We hit the brakes when we see a stop sign or red light. We are careful to go the right way on a one-way street. We merge when the sign tells us to merge. On a relatively short trip, a driver will make a hundred decisions based on the signs on the road and the rules they represent.

Following these simple driving instructions is not a recipe for ruining our trip or the joy of the open road. It is a way to make sure we stay alive! These rules protect us, direct us, and keep us (and others on the road) safe. Without them, a one-mile drive across town would be dangerous, chaotic, and potentially life-threatening.

### Talk About It

When you were a child, how did you picture or imagine God? How has this changed through the years?

### DVD Teaching Notes

*As you watch the video segment for session 5, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.*

Guidelines on how we should treat each other

Tabernacle accommodations

Atonement for sins

The God of the Upper Story wants to do life with the Lower Story

### DVD Discussion

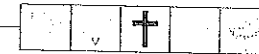
1. If we see God as a cosmic killjoy just waiting for people to do something wrong so he can catch and punish them, how will this impact our relationship with him?
2. The Ten Commandments are the basic “rules of the road” for how people are to relate to God and each other (Exodus 20:1 – 17; *The Story*, pp. 61 – 62). How would our lives and faith improve if we followed these commands (in action and in spirit)? What can we do to embrace and follow these commands more fully?
3. Randy unpacked the reality that God is seeking to come down and connect with his people ... with us! He said that three things need to happen for God to draw near to us in the Lower Story and experience his presence. Why is each of these so important?
  - There must be rules to guide how people relate to God and to each other
  - God will need a place to stay
  - Sin must be atoned for

*The God of the Upper Story wants to come down and do life with us in the Lower Story. God is no longer going to be "up there" but "down here."*

4. God no longer dwells in tents or temples; he lives in us (Acts 7:48 – 50; 1 Corinthians 6:19). How does recognizing that God dwells in us help connect his Upper Story to our Lower Story on a daily basis?
  
5. God showed his love for people and his desire to connect the Upper and Lower Story by moving into their neighborhood. He settled in, right in their midst. God is still seeking to connect with us on a deeply personal level. What are ways you experience the presence and care of God breaking into your daily life?
  
6. This chapter of *The Story* and Randy's lesson both reveal the third thing God had to do so that we could experience his presence in a personal way. The biggest obstacle of all needed to be overcome ... human sin. Sacrifices needed to be made so that human wrongs could be cleansed and covered over (atoned for). How does the sacrificial system found in *The Story* and the book of Leviticus pave the way for the final sacrifice that would wash away all sins forever (the death of Jesus on the cross)?

7. "Mad Cow Disease," as Randy called it, was an example of people trying to invent their own religion, to create their own way to God. How do people still do this today and how are the results just as disastrous?

8. God promised that his presence would be with the people and they would stand out in the world because of it. This is still true today. What are some ways Christians *should* stand out in our world? Name one area of your life in which you sense God is calling you to look different to the world because he is with you.



9. Read movement 3 of *The Story* (p. 11 of this participant's guide). What is the big theme of this third movement?

*In God's community things are different. People are treated with full dignity and respect—no hurting, no hurling, no hoarding, no attacks, no withdrawing.*

### **Closing Prayer**

*As you take time to pray, here are some ideas to get you started:*

- Ask God to give you a clearer vision of who he is. Pray that it will not be tainted by false understandings and childish images, but shaped and informed by his Word.
- Welcome God, in growing measure, into your heart, home, church, and workplace.
- Thank Jesus for being the ultimate, complete, and final sacrifice for sin. Celebrate that you are made clean through his shed blood on the cross.

### **Between Sessions**

#### *Personal Reflections*

Ask yourself: How am I doing when it comes to the three things God set in place so his story can connect more with my story? Am I seeking to do my part to ensure my relationship with God is as close as possible? Am I following his commands and direction? Am I seeking healthy relationships, loving others the way they would want to be loved? Do I invite God to dwell fully in my heart and life? How might I celebrate his presence in me and communicate with him more freely and more often? Do I live with an absolute, rock-solid confidence that all of my sins have been atoned for through Jesus' death on the cross and glorious resurrection?

#### *Personal Action*

Jesus took the helpful, life-giving information of the Ten Commandments and clarified it in the Sermon on the Mount. Read Matthew 5:17–48 this week. Let Jesus' teaching grow your understanding of how the commandments of God bring life and hope.

#### *Read for Next Session*

Take time before your next small group to read chapter 6 of *The Story*.