

A Good Shepherd  
Sacred Story

The Ten Best Ways to Live

Adapted by:  
Brenda J. Stobbe

**Illustrations by:  
Jennifer Schoeneberg**

2nd Edition  
©Good Shepherd, Inc. 1991, 1992  
Good Shepherd, a registered trademark of Good Shepherd, Inc.  
All Rights Reserved  
Printed in U.S.A.

## THE TEN BEST WAYS TO LIVE ..•. MA TERIALS

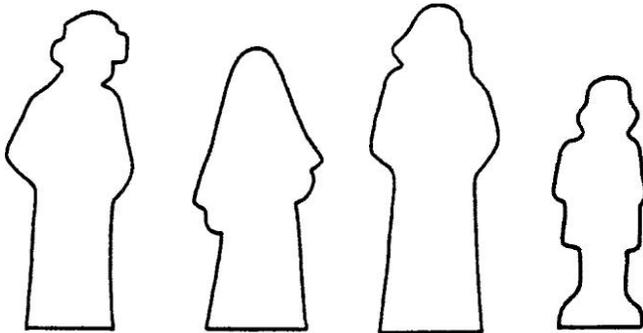
- large rectangular wicker basket to hold:
  - wooden Moses figure
  - wooden Mt. Sinai
  - 4 wooden people of God figures
  - envelope holding 13 laminated tablets\*
- desert box (optional)

This story is written to be told in the desert box. During the work/art response time, encourage the children to do it that way. If you have more than 12 children in your circle for the story presentation, we recommend telling the story on the floor without the desert box so all children can see.

- \* By storing these tablets in a small heart shaped box (easily purchased on sale after Valentine's Day), we visually emphasize that people of God remember and keep "the ten best ways to live" in their hearts.



Moses



People of **God**

THE TEN BEST WAYS TO LIVE .... EXODUS 19:1-25, 20:1-17

ACTION  
S

WORD  
S

After speaking, go to the shelf and carry the story back to the circle. Then walk to the desert box and pull it back to your place in the circle.

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

After speaking, allow 10-15 seconds of silence during which you reverently touch the Moses figure or smooth the sand. Place Mt. Sinai in a corner of the desert box.

All of the words to this story are inside of me. Will you make silence with me so I can find all the words to my story?

Place the four people of God in the desert box toward the opposite corner of Mt. Sinai.

The people of God were free!

Place Moses near the people of God.

God had helped Moses lead the people of God across the Red Sea.

Shake your head.

Now they were in the wilderness.

Touch one or more of the people of God.

There were no laws of Egypt to obey.

Nod your head and smile.

Then Yahweh spoke to Moses. "Now you have seen how I took care of my people. So, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will be my people. "

Touch Mt. Sinai.

All of the people of God said, "Yes, we will do what Yahweh asks of us. We will obey."

Shake your head.

In the wilderness was a very holy mountain. It was called Sinai. On this mountain Moses had seen a burning bush and heard God's voice.

Gently touch the Moses figure.

The people of God were not all allowed on the mountain.

But Moses was.

Move Moses near Mt. Sinai.

Open the envelope and take out the ten individual tablets.

Stand the tablet in the sand.

Stand the tablet in the sand next to the first.

Stand the tablet in the sand.

Nod your head and smile.

Place your hand over your heart. Lay the two tablets containing all the commandments in front of the desert box on the floor. Add the final tablet piece that says, "God loves you."

God knew that the people of God needed to know the best way to be God's people.

So God called Moses to the holy mountain and gave Moses ten tablets that told the people of God the best ways to be with God and the best ways to be with people.

Moses took the tablets to the people. Moses said, "The best ways to be with God are:

Worship only God (Yahweh)

Don't make any idols or images.

Don't use God's name in a bad way.

Keep the Sabbath holy.

The best ways to be with other people are:

Respect your mother and father.

Don't kill.

Keep the family together.

Don't steal.

Don't lie.

Don't want what others have."

When the people of God heard the ten best ways to live they knew that God's law was the best law they could have.

They decided to keep God's law in their hearts.

And God promised to always love the people of God.

## WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder what the holy mountain looked like?

I wonder if Moses was afraid to go to the mountain?

I wonder if the people of God were happy with their new laws?

Remove the tablets from the sand and floor and put them into the envelope. Place the envelope and the wooden pieces back in the basket. Cover the desert box.

After speaking, return the story basket to its shelf. Pull the desert box back to its space.

Dismiss the children only when all have had the opportunity to choose their work.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make it your work today or another day.

I wonder what you will make your work today. Will you draw or paint? Will you make a story your own? Let's go around the circle and choose our work.

## THE TEN BEST WAYS TO LIVE .... TEACHER HELPS

In this story we have the most detailed terms of any covenant God made with God's people. The story begins with God saying, "See what I can do. I took you from Egypt. Now this is what you must do to stay in right relationship with me and each other." This is explained in what we now call the Ten Commandments. The Hebrew people called them the law or the Torah. These are more than just commandments for holy worship and the way to stay in right relationship with God. These are the teachings for the people of God to stay in right relationship with each other as well.

The stone tablets on which the laws were written were kept in the ark of the covenant. These tablets were probably taken out and read at covenant renewal ceremonies. This may have been as often as once a year or as little as once every seven years. At this time Yahweh and Israel renewed their promises to each other. (The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Vol. 4, edited by George A. Buttrick, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962, p.572)

We develop the law as the best way, first, to be in relationship with God. Then follows the best way to be in relationship with other people. Many of the laws were very specific. For instance, the law on killing forbids murder, not the forms of killing Israel found acceptable, e.g. war or capital punishment. The law that prohibits lying requires the truth to be told in a lawsuit involving neighbors. (The New Oxford Annotated Bible, edited by Herbert May and Bruce Metzger, New York: Oxford University Press, 1073, p. 983) The fact that these laws were for a specific historic time does not make them invalid for the people of God today. I'm simply sharing this scholarship to help you understand how and why these laws developed for the people of God.

Once again the emphasis in this story is on the relationship between God and God's people. Just as we have rules in our room so that we may all function happily and to the best of our ability, all of the world needs some limits within which to function.

The wondering questions begin with a wonderment about the holy mountain of Sinai. We wonder what the mountain looked like. Was it like our rock? Or was it covered with shrubs? Or was it a volcano?

The second question asks if Moses was afraid to go to the mountain. A few children may pick up on the fact that this is the same mountain where Moses experienced God in the burning bush. Would that memory be a good one or a bad one? Was the voice of God that came to Moses one he feared or welcomed?

The final question wonders if the people were happy with the new laws. Some children may feel a definite yes, while others will believe the people were unhappy and would have preferred no laws. Some older children may feel the people knew the laws were good, even though they didn't like having to follow them.

Be sure to emphasize that the people of God remembered these laws and kept them in their hearts. One day the children will put together the fact that the tablets, when placed together, form a heart and that there is a strong link between setting limits and loving someone. So we try to set the limits in our room and tell the story because we love, not because we deny. If we really didn't care about the children, we would not insist that there are limits to the behavior we consider acceptable. The most effective educational tool we have is our modeling of the best ways to be with God and with people.

#### SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

Sometimes rules are hard to live by. Which is easier for you to follow, rules that are spoken to you or rules that are written down?

If you as a class were to write the rules for God's people to live by today, what would they be?

**In** our lesson there are ways to be with God and ways to be with people. Now, write five ways to be nature--your world (think environment).

Some people believe that all of the laws we have today can be put into the categories of the ten laws of God. Think of laws you know. Where do they fit into the ten laws? Which ones do not fit anywhere? Would God's Ten Best Ways To Live be different if God gave them to us today?