



# Weaving God's Promises

## LESSON 7

### Troubles in the Wilderness

*This story may be divided into several lessons. The story has four parts: the gift of manna, the Ten Commandments, the golden calf and the people in the wilderness.*

#### Summary of Today's Story

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After crossing the Red Sea, the people of Israel head toward the Promised Land, going through the Middle Eastern wilderness. There is much grumbling among the people.

The people eventually stop at Mount Sinai, where Moses goes up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments from the Lord God. When he descends from the mountain, he finds the people worshipping a golden calf, which they had made themselves. Angry, Moses breaks the tablets of the Ten Commandments. Though God punishes the people for their unfaithfulness, God still leads them to the Promised Land.

#### Where You'll Find Today's Story

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##### In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*.

**Exodus 16-20, 32**

**Numbers 9:15-23, 11:1-15**

##### In Children's Bibles

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space below.

##### In Our Sunday Lectionary

Today's story is told in church on the following Sundays:

Year A: Third Sunday in Lent

Proper 6 (Sunday closest to June 15)

Year B: Third Sunday in Lent

The Day of Pentecost

Proper 13 (Sunday closest to August 3)

Proper 21 (Sunday closest to September 28)

Year C: The Day of Pentecost

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## Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

The wilderness of the Middle East is a tough place to be. The people grumble and complain about the road conditions—not enough food, not enough variety of food, a shortage of water, constant walking. They begin to remember Egypt fondly and with nostalgia. Distance makes the heart grow fonder! The Hebrews have forgotten that they were slaves in Egypt and they have forgotten how oppressed they were. They begin longing to return!

The high and low points of this journey in the wilderness happen at the same time. While Moses goes up on Mount Sinai to receive the Law from God, the people fashion an idol made of gold to worship. Imagine how Moses must have felt as he came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments, which would turn the Hebrew people from slaves into God's holy people, and saw those people dancing around a god made from old Egyptian jewelry!

This sin against God reminds us of the sin against God by Adam and Eve. In both instances, the punishment is exile—exile from God's land and self-imposed exile from God through our own actions.

For this sin, the people would spend another generation without a home—so the first generation of apostates would not see the Promised Land. But notice that *God does not leave us!* God stays with us even when we abandon God!

Then there are the Ten Commandments. Older children can and should learn them by heart. These laws are actually based on a commandment from God that is first expressed in Deuteronomy, but which we know from Jesus: “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. And love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets.”

An important theme that runs through the story of our salvation is the theme of rebelliousness against God. God calls the people “a stiff-necked people”—constantly resisting trusting in God or following God's way. And God still stays with them, as God always stays with us when we go astray.



## The Episcopal Thread

On Sundays in Lent, we begin the service of Holy Eucharist with the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) on page 350 in the *Prayer Book*, followed by a Penitential Order on page 351. This is a reminder that what Jesus called the greatest commandments—to love God and to love our neighbor—do not in any way supersede or make obsolete the Ten Commandments. As Christians and as Anglicans, we are still bound by the commandments that God gave us as a gift in the wilderness.



## Weaving God's Beloved Community

The wilderness is a tough place. People need food and drink, and they need shelter.

In a world that reflect God's Beloved Community, the natural world will still contain hostile environments such as deserts, and there will still be wildfires and floods that endanger people's lives and livelihoods.

But as agents of God's Community and bearers of hope to God's people, we can still strive to ensure that all persons have access to the resources they need to survive, and access to the opportunities that they need to thrive.

Topics that can be discussed with children:

God really wants all people to enjoy the world that God created. What do people need in order to live in the world? Where do you go for food and drink? And what are your favorites? What if everybody could also enjoy your favorites?

What about other ways to enjoy God's world? Look around your neighborhood. Are there trees and green spaces where people can run around and have shade from the hot sun?



### Gathering

As the children enter the room, give them a simple activity that relates to

today's lesson.

For younger children, a simple coloring or play-dough activity would be fun and engaging.

For older children, word games or puzzle sheets will get them started and help them settle down. (You'll find an online resource for creating puzzles under on

page 2 in the Appendix, also found on the Website.) Or you might simply let the children enjoy a brief time of fellowship, giving them an opportunity to visit with each other, establish friendships and build community.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, begin the class with a short opening prayer.



### Telling the Story

Read aloud today's story from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, tell the story in your own words, or read from the version of the story we provide, found on pages 8-11.

You may want to use a few story aids or other storytelling enhancements to bring the story to life for the children. You'll find suggestions on pages 2-3 in the Appendix, also found on the Website.

Today's story has several parts:

- God provides manna and water when the people complain (Exodus 16-17)
- Moses at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19)
- The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17)
- The Golden Calf (Exodus 21)
- The cloud leading the Israelites (Numbers 9:15-23)
- The people grumbling (Numbers 11:1-15)

It is tempting to focus on only one of these stories, for example, on the giving of the Ten Commandments. But our point in the context of our whole year's lessons—the story of our salvation—is not so much the giving of the Law as it is the experience and the process of becoming God's people and of being carried by God. The Ten Commandments, the Golden Calf and all the rest of these stories fit into this grand story as one of God's gifts of love to us.

At this point, you do not need to explain the story or explore its meaning. This is the time for children to hear the story. For now, simply let them absorb it in their heads and in their hearts. Later, while having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it.



## Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your classroom.

### Materials

- small table with a cloth to cover it
- 2 candles or a single large Christ candle
- matches
- Bible
- cross
- optional:* flowers (real, fake or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read one or two verses from today's scripture to help the children connect the story that they just heard with the Bible. If working with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Suggestions for the reading:

*For younger children:* Exodus 20:1-2

*For older children:* Exodus 20:1-17

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

*Reader:* A reading from the book of Exodus:  
(*Read the selected passage.*)

*Reader:* The word of the Lord.

*All:* Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Ask for prayers of thanksgiving to God for God's work in our lives during the past week. This kind of prayer helps the children focus on God's presence in our daily lives.
- Welcome prayers of petition for others or for God's presence to be felt in us. Allow the children to express any concerns or cares for which we may ask God's help and guidance.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special occasions.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



## Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace, such as:

- Bless, O Lord, this food to our use and us to your loving service, in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Or invite one of the children to teach their favorite table grace to the whole class.

This time of sharing food is a good time to begin discussing the story of Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness. There is a great contrast between the act of Moses receiving the sacred Law from God—God's sign of love for God's people—and the act of the Israelites with their complaining and making of their own god. The initiative in giving and in love seems to be one-sided; only God reaches out, while the people resist. They have a hard time being thankful.

And so do we. Oftentimes we wander in our own spiritual wilderness of hard times—or even of self-indulgent times—and then is it not hard to be thankful to God?

Invite the children to compare their snack with the feast that the Israelites received in the manna and the quails! They may also compare the abundance of their snack—and of all their other material riches—with the poverty of so many millions of the world's population and count the blessings that God has given us.

Older children may pick up on the making of a false idol. Ask:

- What are the idols we create?
- What is our own personal wilderness, our own struggles and hardships and temptations?
- How does God lead us?
- What is *our* "pillar of fire" that will lead us to God?





## Memorization

Ask the intermediate-age children to memorize the

Ten Commandments.



## Weaving Our Faith

Before the closing prayer, help the children weave today's lesson together with their life experiences and their own thoughts and ideas by

asking the following questions. Such questions help the children assimilate the story and also provide them with a simple synopsis of what they have learned today. Ask:

- What was our story about today?
- How did the people disobey God?
- What does this story say about God?
- What did we learn today?

To help the children remember today's story, remind them of these key words or phrases:

- *Ten Commandments*
- *unfaithful*
- *law*



## Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or

back to their homes with God's love and blessing.

The prayer can be very simple and straightforward, like this one:

- Thank you, Lord, for being our guide in our lives, for giving us your Ten Commandments, for loving us. Please stay with us as we return to our homes and our families and friends, loving you and loving our neighbors as ourselves. We ask this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

End the class with a dismissal that is used in church, such as:

- The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The children respond:

- And also with you.



# Weaving God's Promises

## EXODUS 16-20 and 32; NUMBERS 9:15-23; 11:1-15

### Hungry!

God's people are unhappy. In fact, they are *very* unhappy. They are full of complaints and they are grumbling every chance they get. Moses hears them grumble, and God hears them grumble, and the grumbling annoys them. Didn't the people just get set free from slavery and from making bricks for Pharaoh in Egypt? Didn't they see God save them from the Egyptian soldiers by parting the waters of the Red Sea so the people can cross the sea on dry land?

But maybe you can't blame them for being unhappy—if you know they are un-happy because they don't trust that God will always stay with them and help them.

For one thing, they're in the wilderness. There's nothing out here but rocks and dirt and shrubs. It's hot and dry, it never rains, and everything is brown. And they're living in tents. In Egypt, the people at least had a house to live in and good food to eat. There were melons and pomegranates, garlic and spices, bread, lots of meat. There was always plenty of food and drink. In the wilderness where things are scarce, they forget what it was like to live in Egypt and be a slave. They forget they had to make bricks every day and never take a day off, and the Egyptians would hit them and yell at them.

Today, it's been two months since they escaped from Egypt. They are tired of the wilderness and how they can't have the food they are used to. They complain to Moses, "I wish we died in Egypt where we at least had lots of bread and meat! Here we are in the desert, and we're going to die of hunger!"



But God hears them complain. God says to Moses, “I hear that my people are hungry, so I am going to rain down bread from heaven for you. You will have bread from heaven every morning. And every evening, I will send meat for you to eat.”

That evening, a giant flock of quails fly into the camp. The whole camp is covered with quails. The people kill the quails and eat them for dinner.

The next morning, the people wake up and find the ground covered with flakes of milky white stuff. They taste it, and it tastes like wafers made with honey.

“What is this stuff?” they ask each other. “What in the world is it?”

Moses says to them, “You asked for food. This is the bread that God has given you to eat. Take as much as you need, but no more. If you try to store more, it will get worms by the next day. Only on the sixth day of the week may you gather two days’ worth of this stuff, so that the next day, on the Sabbath, you won’t have to work to get your food.”

So the people do what Moses tells them to do. They never could figure out what the white stuff is, so they call it *manna*, which means “What is it?” For the next 40 years, while the people are wandering around in the wilderness, they always eat this manna. Maybe they get tired of it, but at least they always have food to eat.

## **Thirsty!**

Today everybody is thirsty. They don’t have any water today. Here in the wilderness, there is no river, no pond, no vessels full of good clean water. In Egypt, there’s always water! The people get scared.

“We’re going to die of thirst! Give us water! Did you bring us out of Egypt just to kill us with thirst?”

Moses goes to God. “They are ready to kill me unless I find water for them!” he says.

God says to Moses, “Go ahead of the people to a rock that I will show you. When you get there, hit the rock with the stick that you used in Egypt. When you hit the rock, water will come out of it and the people can drink that water.”

So Moses takes his big stick with him, and God leads him to a rock. There Moses hits the rock, and water pours out. And the people drink as much as they want and put water in jars to take with them.

### **Make us a god!**

The Israelites get to a mountain called Mount Sinai, where they set up camp. They are going to be here for a while. Moses has a meeting with God on this mountain. He climbs up the mountain by himself to be with God. Here God will give Moses the tablets that we call the Ten Commandments, and Moses will give the Ten Commandments to the people. The commandments will help the Israelites become a nation, with rules for obeying God and rules for being with each other.

But Moses is on the mountain for many days. The people start to get worried. What’s happened to him? Maybe lions attacked him, or maybe he fell off a cliff and won’t come back!

Some of the people go to Aaron, who is sitting in his tent. “Aaron, we don’t know what happened to Moses, and he is our connection to God. So can you make a god for us out of gold? We need a god!”

Aaron says, “All right. Give me your gold and I will make a statue for you. That will be a god for you to worship.”

So Aaron takes the gold and melts it. Then he puts it in a mold shaped like a calf. When the gold gets cold, he takes it out of the mold and sets it on a rock. The people see the golden calf statue and say, “Here is the god that brought us out of Egypt! Let’s eat and drink and celebrate, and dance around this god!”

God sees the people at the foot of the mountain dancing around the golden calf. God is angry. God says to Moses, “You need to go down now! Your people just made a golden statue of a calf and they are worshiping it!”

So Moses hurries down the mountain, carrying the two tablets of the Ten Commandments that God has just carved out and given to him. Moses sees the people dancing around the golden calf. He too is angry, and he throws down the tablets, and they smash into pieces. Then he grabs the calf statue and burns it back into plain gold and throws the gold into the water. He says to the people, “You have sinned a great sin! God is very angry with you! But I will go back up to the mountain and plead for you and ask God’s forgiveness for what you have done.”

The people hear how God is angry at them, and they are very sad. This is the worst thing that they have done in the wilderness, to make a statue and worship the statue instead of worshiping the God who saved them. And still, God stays with them.



# Weaving God's Promises

## MANNA RACE for Primary, Elementary

God took care of God's people by giving them manna to eat while they were in the wilderness. Every morning when they woke up, there was manna lying all over the ground. The Israelites just needed to gather it up and put it in a basket for their meals. They needed to gather it every day because the manna would be rotten if they got greedy and gathered more than one day's worth. The only time they could gather more was on Saturday, the day before the Sabbath, because they could not work on the Sabbath.

Children scramble to see who can gather all their scattered manna first in this team race.

### Materials:

paper  
paper bag

### Directions:

Invite the children to play the Manna Race game:

1. Designate an area of *open ground* where the *Israelites* (children) "sleep." It could be an area in the room marked off by masking tape, or a carpeted part of the room, or even the hallway.
2. Divide the children into teams, two tribes of Israel, with one person from each team being the *basket*. Give the tribes names, either real or imaginary, such as *Cheetos*® and *Doritos*®.
3. Ask each child to tear a piece of white paper into twelve sections. These pieces of paper are the *manna*. Collect all the pieces in a paper bag.
4. Have the children sit together with their tribe on the *open ground*.
5. When you say "Time for bed!" players close their eyes. While their eyes are closed, toss the *manna* around the room.
6. When you say "Morning!" players open their eyes and start gathering the *manna*.
7. When a player gets exactly 12 pieces, the player hurries to the tribe's *basket* and puts them in the *basket's* hand, one at a time, counting the pieces out loud.
8. The player then goes back to the *open ground* and sits down. Tribe members should sit together.
9. When all the members of a tribe are sitting down, they shout "Manna time! Let's party!" They are the winners.



# Weaving God's Promises

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, FRUIT-STYLE for Elementary, Intermediate

Children use the letters in the words *FRUIT SNACKS* to make the Ten Commandments easy to remember.

### Materials:

- fruit snacks (at least 3 per child)
- dry erase board or newsprint
- black marker
- index cards with lines
- scissors

### Preparation:

On the dry erase board or newsprint taped to the wall, copy the *fruit snacks text* found on page 14.

### Directions:

Give each child several index cards and invite the children to make Ten Commandments cards. Give the children these directions:

1. Copy the fruit snacks text onto the index cards. Make at least 3 copies.
2. Glue a fruit snack onto the card.

Keep one. Give the other two to the Pastoral Care team for gifts for the homebound and ill in the parish.

# Fruit Snacks Text

## AN EASY WAY TO REMEMBER THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

- F** False witness, you shall not bear
- R** Respect and honor your parents
- U** Uplift other gods before Me, you shall not
- I** Images and idols are not to be worshiped
- T** To keep it holy,
- S** Sabbath should be remembered
- N** Name of the Lord, do not misuse
- A** Adultery, you shall not commit
- C** Covet your neighbor's property, you shall not
- K** Kill, you shall not
- S** Steal, you shall not.

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# Weaving God's Promises

## TEN COMMANDMENTS MAGNETS for Primary

Children sculpt clay into small Ten Commandment tablets and make them into magnets to be taken home and stuck on the refrigerator as a reminder of our sacred law.

### Materials:

clay  
toothpicks  
adhesive-backed magnetic strips  
scissors

### Preparation:

Cut the adhesive-backed magnetic strips into  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to  $\frac{3}{4}$ " pieces.

### Directions:

Invite each child to make a Ten Commandments magnet. Give the children these directions:

1. Mold two small tablets out of clay.
2. Using toothpicks, make scratches in the clay to replicate the Ten Commandments.
3. Once the tablets are dry, attach a strip of adhesive-backed magnetic tape to the back of your tablets.



# Weaving God's Promises

## TEN COMMANDMENT BOOKMARKS for Elementary

Children make sturdy bookmarks in the shape of a tablet on which they print one of the Ten Commandments.

### Materials:

construction paper  
yarn  
darning or crewel needles  
fine-tip markers  
scissors  
dry erase board or newsprint  
black marker  
*optional*: clear contact paper

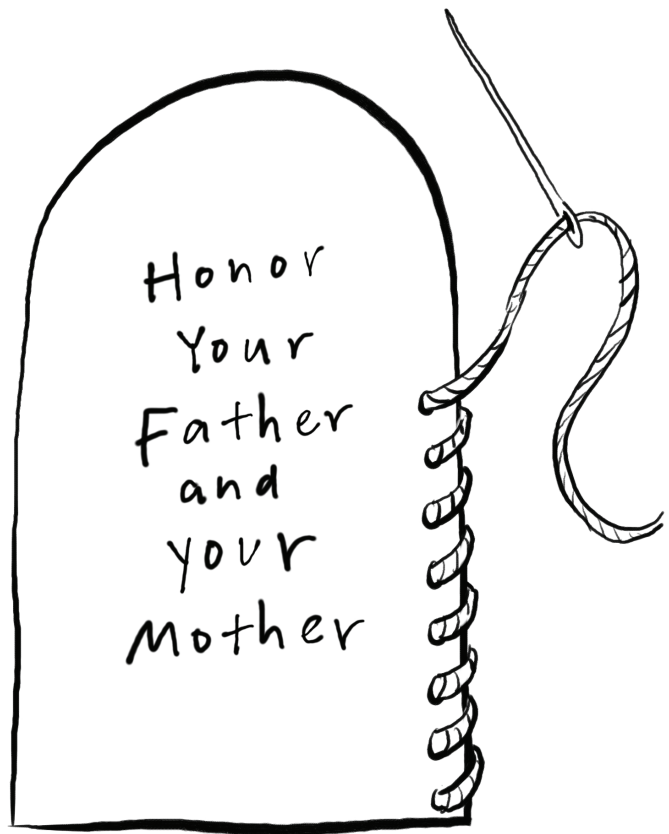
### Preparation:

Print a simplified version of the Ten Commandments on the dry erase board or newsprint, taped to the wall.

### Directions:

Invite each child to make a Ten Commandments bookmark. Give the children these directions:

1. Fold a piece of construction paper in half. Draw a tablet that is curved on the top and straight on the bottom and sides, with one side on the fold. Cut out the tablet.
2. Choose one of the Ten Commandments and print it in the center of the tablet.
3. If you wish to make the bookmark stronger, lay the tablet on clear contact paper after peeling off the backing. Turn over the bookmark and do the same to the back side. Cut off the excess contact paper.
4. Thread a needle with yarn and whipstitch all around the edges of the bookmark.







# Weaving God's Promises

## TEN COMMANDMENT WALL PLAQUES for Intermediate

Children write the Ten Commandments on craft sticks and glue them together to make wall plaques.

### Materials:

craft sticks	construction paper
pens or fine-point markers	pencils
macrame cording	scissors
glue	dry erase board or newsprint
black marker	

### Preparation:

Print a simplified version of the Ten Commandments on the dry erase board or newsprint, taped to the wall.

### Directions:

Invite each child to make a Ten Commandments wall plaque. Give the children these directions:

1. Using one craft stick as a pattern, trace around it on construction paper 11 times.
2. Inside one of the shapes, print *The Ten Commandments*. In each of the other 10 shapes, print one of the commandments.
3. Cut out each shape and glue it to a stick.
4. Glue two craft sticks together for each of the two sides of the wall plaque.
5. Put glue on the ends of the stick with the words *The Ten Commandments* and lay it at the top across the side sticks. Continue in this manner until you have all of the commandments attached to the side sticks. Make sure the commandments are in the proper order. Let dry.
6. Turn the wall plaque over and measure a piece of the cord to go all the way around the edges.
7. Run a line of glue up both sides of the sticks. Lay the cord on the glue up the left side of the wall plaque. Then, leaving a 6" loop at the top, lay the cord on the glue down the right side. Cut off any extra cord at the bottom. Let dry. (You may wish to place a heavy object on top to make sure the cord sticks.)



# Weaving God's Promises

## TEN COMMANDMENT SLATES for Intermediate

Children make oversized tablets on which they write the Ten Commandments.

### Materials:

large sheets (12" x 18") of light-colored construction paper or poster board  
black markers                      crayons  
rulers                                  scissors  
paper punch                        yarn  
pencils                                dry erase board or newsprint  
black marker

### Preparation:

Before class, cut 2 or 3 pieces of poster board into tablet shapes. These are the patterns for the children to use to make their own tablets. The tablets will need to be large enough for children to write all Ten Commandments on them. Making extremely large tablets also makes the lesson more impressive.

Write the Ten Commandments on the dry erase board or newsprint, taped to the wall.

### Directions:

Give each child 2 sheets of poster board. Set out the tablet patterns and invite each child to make Ten Commandment slates. Give the children these directions:

1. Trace the pattern onto two pieces of poster board and cut out.
2. Use a ruler and pencil to draw lines 1" apart, starting from where the arched section of the tablets stop and going all the way to the bottom.
3. With a pencil, write *The Ten* on one tablet and *Commandments* on the other, forming a semicircle across the top of the arch. (By using a pencil, you can erase any mistakes.) Trace over the pencil marks with a crayon.
4. With a marker write the commandments (simplified, if desired) on the tablets. The first five go on the first tablet, the last five on the second tablet.
5. Punch two holes on the inside edge of each tablet and tie them together with yarn, forming a book.



# Weaving God's Promises

## WATER FROM A ROCK for Primary, Elementary

Children witness how water will flow out of a bottle—or not—depending upon how tightly the lid is screwed on.

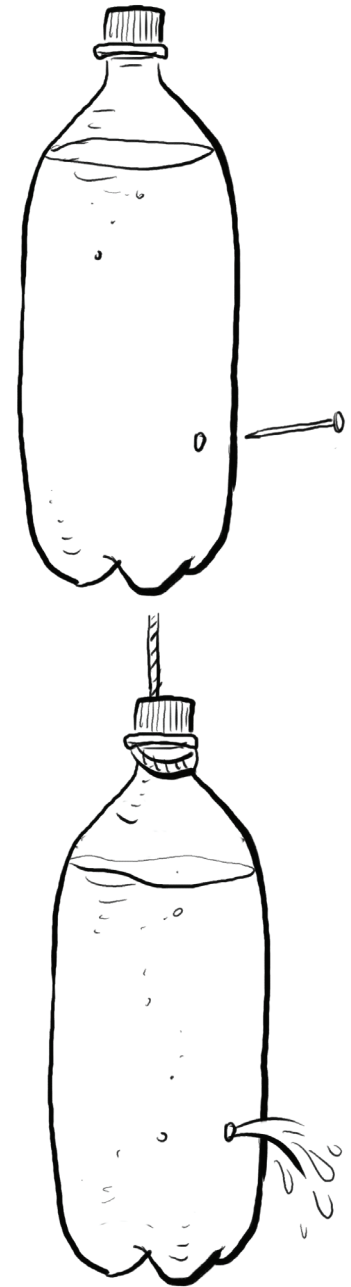
### Materials:

clean 2-liter plastic soda bottle with lid  
large nail  
twine  
water

### Directions:

Invite the children to observe this demonstration:

1. Using a large nail, make a perfectly round hole on one side of the bottle, near the bottom.
2. Fill the bottle with water while holding your finger over the hole.
3. Put the lid on tightly then remove your finger. A tiny bit of water may leak out.
4. Tie a length of twine around the neck of the bottle and hang it from a tree or fence.
5. Loosen the lid and let the water flow. Tighten the lid to stop the water.





# Weaving God's Promises

## WALK THROUGH THE WILDERNESS for Preschool, Primary

It took the people forty years to get through the wilderness because it was such a winding walk.

Children follow squiggly maps to lead them through their own winding walk!

### Materials:

paper  
felt pen

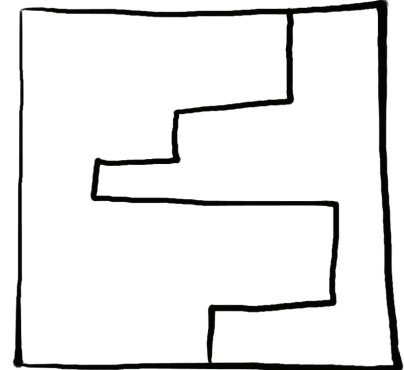
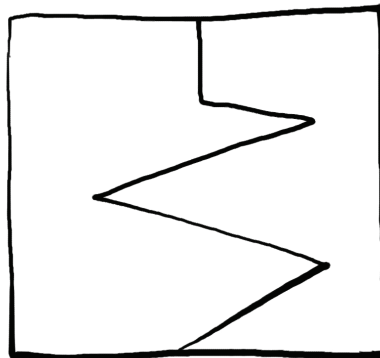
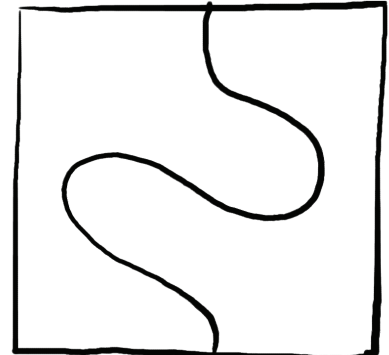
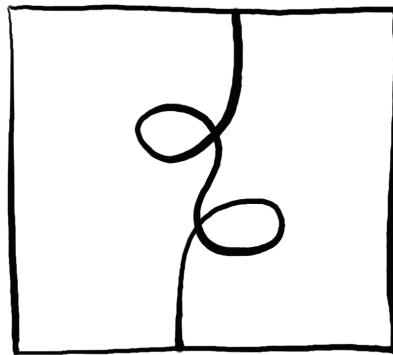
### Preparation:

Draw a different kind of line on each piece of paper. Make at least one squiggly map for each child. See the pictures below for examples.

### Directions:

Invite the children to play the Walk through the Wilderness game:

1. Have children sit or stand at one end of the room. Put a map face down in front of each child.
2. When you call "Let's go to the Promised Land!" the children turn their maps over and walk across the room following the lines on their papers. (Children may bump into each other! Make sure that their bumping is gentle.)
3. When everybody has reached the *Promised Land*, collect the papers, shuffle them and hand them out again.





# Weaving God's Promises

## STONE PAINTINGS for Intermediate

*Younger children can do this project also, but it would need to be simplified.*

Children paint stones representing the gifts that God has given us and put them in a basket for safekeeping to remind them of all the ways in which God provides for us every day.

### Materials:

- small to medium smooth stones
- paint pens
- small baskets

### Directions:

Give each of the children several stones and a basket. Invite the children to paint their stones and fill their baskets. Give the children these directions:

1. Think about how you would describe God and how God cares for us. Think of words such as *faithful, loving, strong*. You might also think of the gifts that God gives us, such as *friendship, perseverance, trust*.
2. Carefully paint one of the words on each of your stones, then decorate the stones if you wish. Let the stones dry.
3. Place the stones in your basket. Keep it in a visible place to remind you that even if you are wandering around in your own spiritual wilderness, even when there seem to be only stones all around you, God is still there.





# Weaving God's Promises

## FAITH AND BLUNDERS for Intermediate

We all make mistakes. The Israelites in the wilderness made lots of mistakes, but God stayed with them!

Children explore the mistakes and wrongdoings that we do and discuss where God is when we do these things.

### Materials:

- Not Always Right* handout (p. 24)
- pencils or pens
- dry erase board or newsprint
- black marker
- tape

### Preparation:

Make a copy of the *Not Always Right* handout for each child.

### Directions:

Give each child a copy of the *Not Always Right* handout along with a pencil or pen. Give the children 10 minutes or so to fill out their sheets.

When finished, ask the class to volunteer answers that they have written on their sheets. Write these down on the dry erase board or newsprint, taped to the wall. **Note:** Since these thoughts may be deeply personal and admitting them may make a child feel vulnerable and perhaps embarrassed, they need not be shared.

As an option, you might ask children to take turns doing a silent charade of some of the actions that were written down and have the rest of the class try to guess the mistake or wrongdoing that's being acted out.

Jump-start a conversation with these questions:

- Think of the mistakes on your list. What did you learn from that mistake?
- Was there someone you needed to ask to forgive you? Did you ask?
- When you make a mistake, does God love you any less?
- Who can help us learn from our mistakes? Can parents? Teachers? Friends? Pastors? How can they help us learn?

Allow some time at the end of the discussion for a prayer of love and forgiveness. You might choose one of the Collects for Lent from pages 218-219 in the *Book of Common Prayer* and simplify it. Here's an example using the prayer from the Second Sunday in Lent:

O God, who above all is Love and Mercy: Forgive us when we have done wrong or made mistakes and have gone far away from you. Bring us back to you, and give us your love and your forgiveness so that we will always remember that you are with us. *Amen.*

Or you might end the discussion by reminding the class of one of the promises in our Baptismal Covenant: "Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?" Point out that the words are *whenever you fall into sin*, not *if you fall into sin*. We recognize that we are sinners but that God will always be there with us and will always love us anyway.

# NOT ALWAYS RIGHT

Think about a time in your life when you have done these things and write them down.

A time when I cheated...

A time when I made a pig of myself...

A time when I took something that didn't belong to me...

A time when I lied...

A time when I hurt someone by something I said...





# Weaving God's Promises

## TRAIL SNACKS FOR THE WILDERNESS for Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

*Some of these snacks contain peanut butter or peanuts. Do not use these if anyone in the class has a peanut allergy.*

Invite the children to make snacks that would be easy to carry through the wilderness.

### **In addition to the specific ingredients you need:**

- mixing bowl
- mixing spoon
- small paper cups or sandwich bags

### **Trail Crumbs**

Mix together in a bowl and then divide into cups or sandwich bags:

- 2 cups chopped peanuts or walnuts
- ½ cup chopped dates
- ½ cups shredded coconut
- 1 cup sunflower seeds
- ½ cup chocolate chips

### **Fruit and Nut Mix**

Mix together into a bowl and then divide into cups or sandwich bags:

- ½ cup each dried pitted prunes, apricots, tropical fruit and banana chips
- ½ cup each unsalted cashews, almonds and walnuts (peanuts if no allergies)
- ground cinnamon
- ground cloves

Divide snacks into cups or bags and enjoy during Sharing time.



# Weaving God's Promises

## EVERYBODY ON THE MOUNTAIN! for Elementary

With a million people, it gets pretty crowded on Mount Sinai! Children experience what it might be like by squeezing into a small space.

### Materials:

chalk or masking tape

### Directions:

Invite the children to play the Everybody on the Mountain game:

1. Use the chalk or masking tape to make two large triangles on the floor. The triangles need to be large enough for almost half of the children in your class to stand inside.
2. Divide the class into two equal *tribes of Israel*.
3. See how many children each *tribe* can fit on its *Mount Sinai*—that is, inside their triangle. No part of the children's bodies can be touching the floor outside the triangle. Set a time limit of one minute. Children can sit, stand or lie inside the triangle.



# Weaving God's Promises

## MOUNT SINAI for Elementary

Mount Sinai was a volcano! Exodus 19:18 says: “Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended upon it in fire. The smoke rose from the mountain like smoke from a furnace, while the whole mountain shook violently.”

Children create their own Mount Sinai, either individually or as a group. Below are the directions for a single volcano.

### Materials:

- paper plate
- baby food jar
- mixing bowl
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/3 cup white vinegar
- red, yellow, and blue food coloring
- 1 cup salt
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/4 cup plus 1 teaspoon water

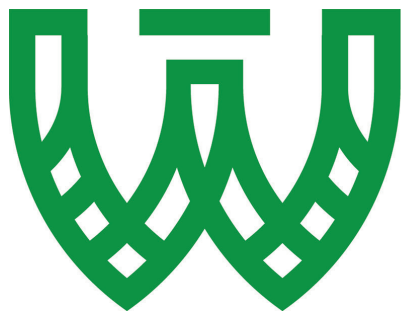
### Preparation:

Mix the salt, flour and water in a bowl. Knead the dough until firm.

### Directions:

Invite the children to help create a volcano:

1. Put the baby food jar in the center of a paper plate. Ask the children to build a dough volcano around the jar (the jar is the crater).
2. Put a teaspoon of baking soda into the jar along with a drop or two of food coloring.
3. Pour the 1/3 cup vinegar into the jar and watch the volcano erupt!



# Weaving God's Promises

## FOLLOW THE PILLAR OF CLOUD for Elementary, Intermediate

The Israelites didn't just wander around wherever they pleased. They followed a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, sent by God to show them the way.

Children play this game, imagining how God sometimes leads us in ways we don't understand, but always gets us there in the end.

### Materials:

- masking tape or chalk
- balloons, 1 per player

### Directions:

Hand out balloons and invite the children to play the Follow the Pillar of Cloud game:

1. At one end of the playing area, make a line using the chalk or masking tape. The area on the far side of the line is the *Promised Land*.
2. Divide the class into two or more teams. Have the children on each team line up one behind the other, 15-20 feet away from the *Promised Land*.
3. At your signal, the first player on each team blows up his or her balloon and then lets it go toward the *Promised Land*. The player must then go where the balloon lands, stop, pick up the balloon, blow it up again, then let it go, aiming to get the balloon across the line into the *Promised Land*.
4. When the balloon lands in the *Promised Land*, the player crosses the line, picks up the balloon, runs back to the starting line and tags the next player. That player then blows up his or her balloon and repeats steps 3 and 4.
5. Children continue playing until everyone has gone to the *Promised Land* and returned. First team to finish wins.



# Weaving God's Promises

## PILLAR-OF-CLOUD, PILLAR-OF-FIRE STORY PICTURES for Preschool, Primary

Children make story pictures with thumbprint people who follow pillars of fire or pillars of cloud—just like the Israelites who followed a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

### Materials:

cotton balls or pillow stuffing  
red tissue paper  
construction paper  
glue  
ink pad for making fingerprints  
scissors  
crayons  
markers  
*Cloud and Fire Patterns* (p. 31)

### Preparation:

Make copies of the *Cloud and Fire Patterns*, one set for each child.

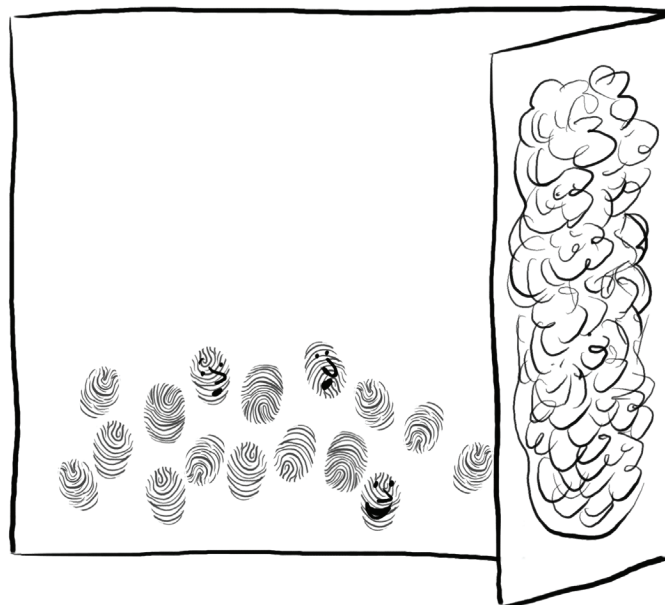
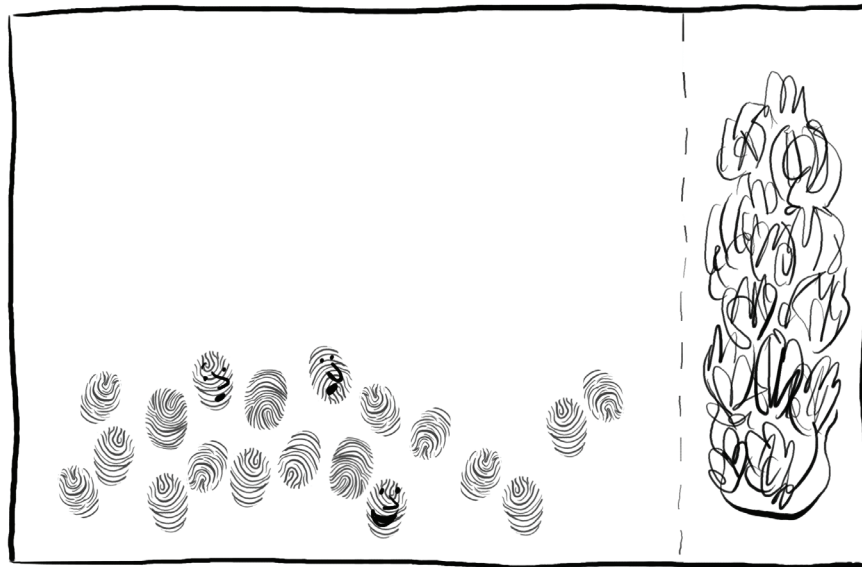
### Directions:

Hand out the patterns and invite each child to make a story picture. Help younger children as needed.

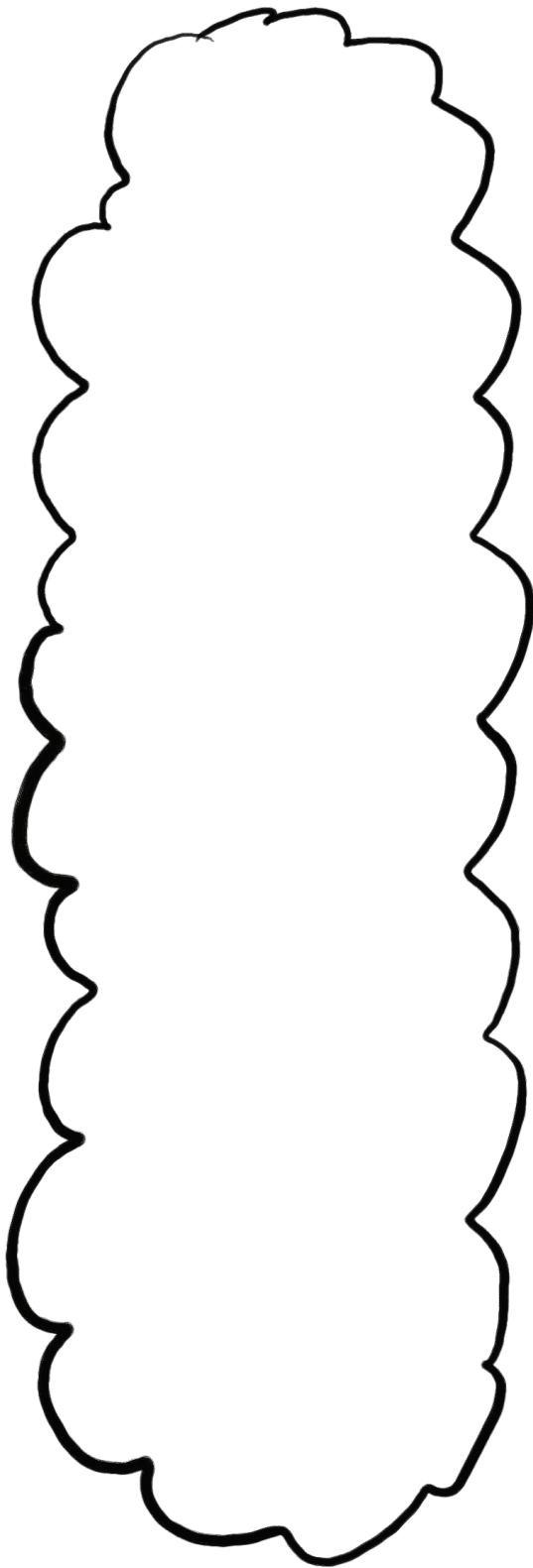
Give children these directions:

1. Cut out the *Cloud and Fire Patterns*.
2. Fold up one side of a piece of construction paper, about 3" from the side. Unfold and lay it flat.
3. Press your thumb (and other fingers, if you wish) on the ink pad and make thumbprints on the inside of the paper, on the larger side of the fold. Leave the smaller side of the fold blank. (See illustration.)
4. Use markers to draw eyes, noses and mouths to turn the thumbprints into people.
5. Refold the paper where it was folded before and glue the pillar of cloud picture on the folded part of the page. Then glue cotton balls or pillow stuffing on the pillar.
6. Unfold the page. On the blank part of the page, underneath the pillar of cloud, glue the picture of the pillar of fire, then glue pieces of red tissue paper on this pillar.

Show the children how, when the picture is flat, the people are following a pillar of fire and when the picture is folded, the people are following a pillar of cloud.



# CLOUD AND FIRE PATTERNS





# Weaving God's Promises

## FOLLOW THE PILLARS!

For Preschool, Primary

Children try to follow your changing commands: “Follow the pillar of cloud!” No! “The pillar of fire!” No! “The pillar of cloud!”

### Materials:

pillow stuffing  
flashlight

### Directions:

Invite the children to play the Follow the Pillars game.

1. Ask the children to line up, one behind the other. Give the child at one end of the line a flashlight—that child is the *pillar of fire*. Give the child at the other end of the line the pillow stuffing—that child is the *pillar of cloud*.
2. When you call out “Pillar of fire!” children turn and follow the child holding the flashlight. When you call out “Pillar of cloud!” children turn and follow the child holding the cloud.
3. After a few times of switching, change leaders until everybody has had a chance to be a leader.





# Weaving God's Promises

## MELTED TREASURES for Preschool, Primary

We know that the Hebrew people had jewelry in the wilderness because they used it to make their golden calf. Some of their jewelry was given to them by the Egyptians as the freed slaves left Egypt.

Children make “tribes of Israel” jewelry for the glory of God, who freed the slaves so that they could worship God in the wilderness.

### Materials:

- different shaped pasta with holes
- food coloring
- string, thin wire or plastic lacing
- scissors

### Preparation:

Dye the pasta by soaking it in food coloring and then letting dry. If you want to use shell pasta or some kind of pasta that does not have a hole in it, soak it first, then make a hole before you let it dry.

Cut a length of string, wire or lacing for each child. Tie a large knot at one end so that the strung pasta does not fall off.

### Directions:

Set out the pasta and pass out the pieces of string and invite each child to make a piece of jewelry. Help the younger children as needed. Give the children these directions:

1. Thread pasta on the string in a pattern.
2. Tie the ends of the string and wear your new necklace.



# Weaving God's Promises

## TRUSTING IN GOD'S WAY for All Children

Sometimes the wrong choice may look like the right one, just like the Israelites thought they were doing the right thing by making a new idol to worship. And sometimes God's way—sending Moses up to the mountain for a long time, leaving the people without their leader—is the right way. It takes some discernment—thinking and prayer and good people to help us—to know what God's way is.

Children help set up and observe this cool demonstration, which shows that not everything that looks right is right!

### Materials:

- 2 stacks of books (one 6" high, the other 12" high)
- 2 yardsticks
- 2 funnels exactly the same size
- masking tape

### Preparation:

Older elementary and intermediate children can help with this preparation.

Place the two stacks of books about 30" apart on the floor. Make a "racetrack" by taping the two yardsticks together across one end. Place the taped-together ends on the short stack of books. Spread apart the untaped ends of the yardsticks and place them on the tall stack of books. You then have a "racetrack" in the shape of a "V." Make a "car" by taping the large ends of two funnels together with masking tape.

### Directions:

Invite the children to observe this demonstration:

1. Put the "car" (taped together funnels) on the track close to the shorter stack of books (at the point of the "V").
2. Let the "car" go. It should move toward the taller stack of books. It will look like the "car" is rolling uphill!
3. Explain that when the track gets wider and wider, the center of the "car" gets lower and lower. The "car" was really rolling downhill just like it should. It only *looked* like it was rolling uphill. Things aren't always as they seem!

# LESSON 7: TROUBLES IN THE WILDERNESS



## We Believe . . .

On Sundays in Lent, we begin the service of Holy Eucharist with the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) on page 350 in the prayer book, followed by a Penitential Order on page 351. This is a reminder that what Jesus called the greatest commandments—to love God and to love our neighbor—do not in any way supersede or make obsolete the Ten Commandments. As Christians and as Anglicans, we are still bound by the commandments that God gave us as a gift in the wilderness.

## Today's Story:



### Exodus 16-20, 32; Numbers 9:15-23, 11:1-15

The high and low points of the journey in the wilderness happen at the same time. While Moses goes up on Mount Sinai to receive the Law from God, the people fashion an idol made of gold to worship. Imagine how Moses must have felt as he came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments, which would turn the Hebrew people from slaves into God's holy people, and saw those people dancing around a god made from old Egyptian jewelry!

This sin against God reminds us of the sin against God by Adam and Eve. In both instances, the punishment is exile—exile from God's land and self-imposed exile from God through our own actions. For this sin, the people would spend another generation without a home—so the first generation of apostates would not see the Promised Land. But notice that *God does not leave us!* God stays with us even when we abandon God!



An important theme that runs through the story of our salvation is the theme of rebelliousness against God. God calls the people “a stiff-necked people”—constantly resisting trusting in God or following God's way. And God still stays with them, as God always stays with us when we go astray.



## Words of Faith

*Ten Commandments*—the summary of what God expects of God's followers

*Unfaithful*—to stray from our commitment to another

*Law*—God's rules and guidelines for living a happy, healthy life

**Even when we stray from God's commandments, God's love remains and leads us back.**



## Sharing

Read one or more of these stories of Israel in the wilderness from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or from your family Bible. Keep in mind that there are several stories:

- God provides manna and water when the people complain (**Exodus 16-17**).
- Moses climbs Mount Sinai (**Exodus 19**).
- God gives the Ten Commandments (**Exodus 20:1-17**).
- The Israelites worship the Golden Calf (**Exodus 21**).
- A cloud leads the Israelites (**Numbers 9:15-23**).
- The people grumble (**Numbers 11:1-15**).

Reinforce the idea that God continued to love, guide and correct the people of Israel even when they were unfaithful, just as God does with us, today.



# Weaving God's Promises

## This Week at Home



- **Hold a "whine festival."** Make this a playful, funny discussion as we all share the things that bug us: Whine, whine, whine! When do *you* whine? What do you complain about? When is whining most annoying? How do you handle other people's whining and complaining? What's your favorite whine? God is very patient with the Israelites with *their* whining; is God also patient with us?
- **Explore the Ten Commandments.** Make your own two tablets. You could use poster board, Styrofoam or clay. You'll find them in Exodus 20:1-17. Talk about which of the commandments are easiest to follow and which ones are hardest.
- **Have a wilderness meal of poultry, bread and water.** Eat each "course" individually as you read each of the segments from Exodus appropriate to what you are eating. Together imagine what this long period of wandering in the wilderness would have been like. What modern foods and conveniences would you miss? What might be exciting and fun about this extended "camping trip"?
- **Add a commandment.** If your household had an *eleventh* Commandment, what would it be? Use the wording "Thou shalt..." or "Thou shalt not..."
- **Identify your Ten Household Commandments.** What are the Ten Commandments of your household? In other words, what are the Ten (or so) most important rules/guidelines you follow? Family members may also want to spend time identifying what each of their Ten Personal Commandments are as well; what are the rules/guidelines each uses to guide his/her own life?
- **Illustrate the Ten Commandments.** Let each household member pick one or two of the commandments to illustrate, using whatever art materials are available at home. Commandments could be drawn, painting, sculpted, etc. Sculpting materials could include clay, aluminum foil, construction toys, etc. Keep these on display for a while as a way to help everyone remember, "This is what God asks of me!"



## Household Prayer

O God, the Israelites messed up by making a golden calf to worship instead of you. Sometimes we mess up, too, and forget about you. Forgive us when we do wrong, and help us to follow you in love, wherever you may take us. *Amen.*

