

## True Contentment

### STEP 1 **Life Need** (5–10 minutes)

- Optional: Students identify the needs that advertisers appeal to.
- Read and discuss part of a feature in *The Rock*.
  - Bible
  - The Rock*
  - Optional*: online commercial clips

### STEP 2 **Bible Learning** (15–20 minutes)

- Read a teaching aid on two commandments.
- Complete a Bible study on these commandments.
- *Optional*: Read and discuss a psalm.
  - Bible
  - The Rock*
  - Whiteboard or poster board and markers
  - “The Big Ten” booklet from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*
  - Optional*: Bibles

### STEP 3 **Bible Application** (5–10 minutes)

- Identify how God meets needs.
- *Optional*: Create roleplays.
  - Bible

### STEP 4 **Life Response** (about 5 minutes)

- Pray sentence prayers of thanksgiving to God.
- Students write personal notes.

### Memory Verse

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

—Matthew 6:33

indicates items you will need to prepare before class

### Bible Basis:

The commandments regarding stealing and coveting (Exod. 20:15, 17); Jesus teaches healthy attitudes toward possessions (Matt. 6:19–34).

### Bible Truth:

Understanding that God takes care of needs can prevent people from wanting what others have.

### Lesson Aim:

That your students will show respect for the possessions of others.

### Understanding the Bible

Last week’s lesson dealt with commandments related to people. This week’s commandments handle our relation-

ship to things.

In Exodus 20:15, the commandment about not stealing seems to assume the right of ownership of private property. It protects possessions from those who are greedy or lazy.

The next commandment dealing with possessions is in Exodus 20:17—“You shall not covet.” The Hebrew word translated “covet” means “desire.” Depending on the context, it can have either a positive or negative meaning. Here it refers to that envious desire of wanting what’s not ours.

The word “house” (Exod. 20:17) probably means “household,” which would include both people and possessions in the house.

Later, Jesus told His disciples not to worry about their possessions. The phrase “do not worry” (Matt. 6:25, 28, 31, 34) runs like a refrain through the midsection of Matthew’s record of the Sermon on the Mount. It cautions against being overly concerned about possessions.

When it comes to the relationship of people to things, the issue boils down to this: Are people controlling things, or are things controlling people?

## Tips

### classroom

This may be a difficult lesson for your students to grasp. They've no doubt heard commands against stealing and coveting and have treated them like any other rules. It's quite a different thing to go beneath the surface of such laws and try to find their underlying rationale. But the only thing that will help a person conquer the habit of stealing or coveting is a living, trusting relationship with God. Like any relationship, we must commit to it.

Think about each student in your class. How is he or she developing spiritually? Does that student still think of God as a cosmic rule maker and police officer—or is an awareness of God's love developing? Pay special attention in this lesson to what students say during Bible Application (which calls for students to express their opinions) and Life Response (which calls for youth to act upon what they've learned). Their responses will speak volumes.

### PRESESSION ACTIVITY



#### All This Stuff!

• **Objective:** To help your students have a proper perspective regarding material possessions.

Give each student a piece of paper and a pencil. Give them three or four minutes to make a list of their possessions. These need to be things that they own—not something like a house or car that's owned by the whole family.

When everyone has finished, have some of the lists read aloud. Your students will probably find that many of the items are the same. Then have students look at their own lists and cross out any possessions that do not deal with their spiritual lives.

How many are left? What are they? Should there be more?

## Understanding Your Students

Taking their cues from our culture and sometimes from their parents, too many young people are more concerned about personal comfort and pleasure than with the needs and rights of others.

Perhaps that is why it is no longer shocking to see children accused of violent crimes involving theft.

Young people (adults also) live with two false notions: that material things satisfy basic human needs and that we cannot trust God to meet those needs. Today's lesson is targeted against both errors.



# STEP 1

Life Need  
5–10 minutes

## Lesson Aim:

That your students will show respect for the possessions of others.



### TIP

Before class, consider previewing some commercials you consider to be good. Most commercials can be found online. Try to find commercials for products your students would be interested in. Show this collection of commercial clips to your class during this lesson.

**Objective:** That your students identify the needs that advertisers appeal to.

### Materials:

- Bible
- The Rock*

If you watched TV or were online this week, you probably saw a lot of commercials. Think about the commercials you saw, and suggest the ones you think do the best job of making people want to buy the product.

- ▶ **What do you think are the best commercials?** *You may have to suggest one or two yourself to get things rolling. Try to think of ads for products aimed at your students' age-group—clothes, snack foods, movies, etc.*
- ▶ **What do these commercials promise about the product?** *For now, be satisfied with the clear promises—fun, clean hair, good looks, excitement, good taste, etc. The underlying, implied promises will be dealt with later.*
- ▶ **Can these products fulfill these promises? Why or why not?** *(Some promises are legitimate—clean hair and teeth, convenience, etc. But some promises depend on the individual. Not everyone finds the same things fun, exciting, good tasting, and good looking.)*
- ▶ **Now let's turn our attention away from the ads themselves and look at the people who wrote them. Why do you think they chose this way to sell the product?** *Explain that advertisers study the needs and wants of consumers to help them make commercials.*

Distribute *The Rock* and have students look at “Lie Detectors.” Have someone read aloud the introduction and Advertisement #2. Then discuss the questions on page 6.

### ■ From *THE ROCK*—Lie Detectors

- ▶ How do you know when you're becoming materialistic?
- ▶ How do you know when it's OK to buy nice things for yourself and when you should use your money to help the needy? *(You know you're becoming materialistic when you start wanting lots of stuff and think you can't live without it. It's harder to tell when it's OK to spend money on yourself or on the needy.)*

It's not wrong to have needs and reasonable wants are ok too. After all, God made us that way. But it's possible to be so wrapped up in material things that we hurt ourselves and other people. In today's Bible study we'll find out what God says about possessions and where we find real satisfaction in life.

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

#### Materials:

- Online commercial clips

If possible, show your students different commercials you have found online. Lead a discussion about the real message of each commercial.

# STEP 2

Bible Learning  
15–20 minutes

## Bible Basis:

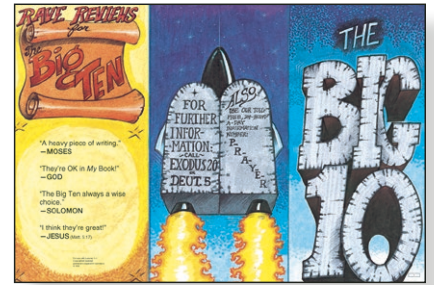
The commandments regarding stealing and coveting (Exod. 20:15, 17); Jesus teaches healthy attitudes toward possessions (Matt. 6:19-34).

**Objective:** That your students describe the attitudes God intended us to have toward material possessions.

### Materials:

- Bible
- The Rock*
- Whiteboard or poster board and markers
- “The Big Ten” booklet from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

Distribute “The Big Ten” booklet. Ask someone to read the eighth and tenth commandments aloud. Explain that these are the commandments they will be dealing with today. Now ask students to turn to the Bible study in *The Rock*.



### ■ From *THE ROCK*—Search for Satisfaction

There are a lot of dissatisfied people in the world. They always want more—more money, more clothes, more things. These people just can’t stand to see another person with more than they have. And they’ll do almost anything to catch up.

1. Think about that type of person. Then answer these questions:

You might divide the class into groups of two or three. There are probably a number of answers to each question. Students should give all the answers they can think of.

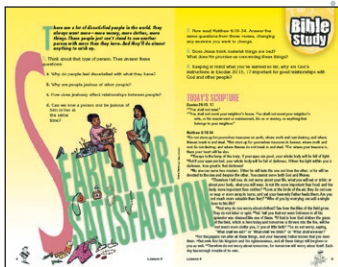
- ▶ 1a. Why do people feel dissatisfied with what they have? (*They see other people with more; they think they would be happier if they had more.*)
- ▶ 1b. Why are people jealous of other people? (*Other people have what they want; other people seem happier than they are; other people remind them of how little they have.*)
- ▶ 1c. How does jealousy affect relationships between people? (*It makes people hate, distrust, and hurt each other. It makes people focus on what the person has rather than on the person.*)
- ▶ 1d. Can we love a person and be jealous of him or her at the same time? (*Ask students to explain their answers. Depending on their definitions of love and jealousy, answers may vary.*)

### ▶ How can such people find real satisfaction in life?

*Some students might think that if a dissatisfied person got all he or she wanted, he or she would be happy. Others will see that such people are never satisfied. In order for such a person to be satisfied, he or she must change his or her way of thinking and look for satisfaction somewhere else.*

2. Now read Matthew 6:19-34. Answer the same questions from these verses, changing any answers you want to change.

- ▶ 2a. Why do people feel dissatisfied with what they have? (*They’re serving the wrong master; they don’t really believe God will take care of them.*)
- ▶ 2b. Why are people jealous of other people? (*With their attention on things rather than God, they think a person who has more things has a better life.*)
- ▶ 2c. How does jealousy affect relationships between people? (*Though this*



## TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:15, 17

<sup>15</sup>You shall not steal.

<sup>17</sup>You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. "

Matthew 6:19-34

<sup>19</sup>Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup>But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

<sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup>The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup>But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

<sup>24</sup>No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

<sup>25</sup>Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup>Can any one of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?

<sup>28</sup>And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup>Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you,—you of little faith?

<sup>31</sup>So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

<sup>32</sup>For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

<sup>33</sup>But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

*passage doesn't explicitly talk about relationships, it does talk about personal peace and satisfaction—requirements for a mature relationship. A person who is worried, self-centered, and dissatisfied can't really devote enough attention to developing a relationship with other people.)*

- ▶ 2d. Can we love a person and be jealous of him or her at the same time? *(This answer is related to 2c. If relationships in general are difficult, surely the relationship of love is almost impossible. A jealous person is insecure, and it takes a sense of security to really give love to another person.)*
- ▶ 3. Does Jesus think material things are bad? What does He promise us concerning these things? *(No. Jesus promises to take care of us. It's important for students to look at things from God's point of view, to take into account God's character.)*

If some of your students become convicted about the importance they attach to possessions, they may start feeling unnecessarily guilty when they find they don't completely change overnight. Be sensitive to these feelings and resist the temptation to preach. Instead, talk about God's love as revealed in today's passage. Assure students that God does care what happens to them, that He has their best interests at heart, and that He can be trusted.

- ▶ **According to these verses, how does God feel about us?** *(He loves us, knows what we need, and is concerned for our welfare.)*
- ▶ **What does a jealous person think about God?** *(He thinks God has given him a rotten deal by not giving him what he wants.)*
- ▶ 4. Keeping in mind what you've learned so far, why are God's instructions in Exodus 20:15, 17 important for good relationships with God and other people? *(Like the commandments we studied last week, these commandments refer to the attitudes behind the actions. Stealing reveals a lack of respect for others because it invades privacy. Coveting reveals a lack of confidence in God's ability and desire to meet our most basic needs. Therefore, these two commandments are a big help in relating to others. Ignoring them leads to trouble. Following them helps us establish and maintain the kinds of relationships God wants us to have.)*

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

#### Materials:

- Bibles

If you have time, lead students through the entire Twenty-third Psalm. Help them detect (1) God's character, (2) the attitudes they should have toward things and toward their own needs, and (3) the implications of all this to the issues of stealing and coveting.

# STEP 3

## Bible Application

(5–10 minutes)

**Objective:** That your students identify some of the needs God meets, and talk about misusing possessions.

### Materials:

- Bible

Today's Scripture passage in Matthew 6 shows that God cares for us and wants the best for us. Because of His concern, we don't need to continually worry about what we have or don't have.

- ▶ **Has anyone ever stolen something from you or abused your belongings? What happened?** *Tell students you would like an explanation without including names.*
- ▶ **How does it make you feel when someone misuses your things?** *(Students might say things like: It makes me angry. It makes me want revenge. If my belonging is damaged or lost, I want the person to replace it.)*
- ▶ **Have you ever lost, misused, or abused someone else's belongings? What happened? Did you make it up to the person in any way?** *After youth have had a chance to respond, say something like the following:*

It's much easier to understand why it's important to respect other people's possessions when you put yourself in the other person's shoes, or when you have experienced what it feels like to have someone steal or destroy something you value.

We should take care of our belongings, but not be so tied to them that we destroy a friendship or a family relationship over them. Also, God wants us to value His care for us more than we value our things.

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

If you have time, have students perform short roleplays in which one person envies another person or misuses another person's belongings.

After each roleplay on envy, ask:

- ▶ **Who or what did this person envy, and why?**
- ▶ **What might have been missing from the envious person's life that made him or her envious?**
- ▶ **What could you say to a person like this to convince him or her that God will take care of his or her needs?**

After each roleplay on misusing belongings, ask:

- ▶ **What was this person upset about?**
- ▶ **How could this person solve his or her problem?**
- ▶ **What could you say to a person like this to convince him that God will take care of his needs?**

# STEP 4

Life Response  
(5–10 minutes)

## Bible Truth:

Understanding that God takes care of needs can prevent people from wanting what others have.

**Objective: That your students thank God for the way He supplies their needs.**

Discuss:

 **What does your room look like?**

Read the memory verse to your students again.

**Having things is not necessarily a sin. But God wants us to keep our focus on Him, not our stuff.** If you discover that any of your students have had a problem with stealing or coveting, encourage him or her to talk with you after class.

Ask your students to privately choose one person they know who doesn't believe that God will take care of his or her needs. Have each student write a personal, private note to that person, encouraging him or her to depend on God. Ask students to include their own stories of how God has met a personal need. If your students feel comfortable actually sending their notes, encourage them to do so. Otherwise, tell them to keep the notes in a prominent spot at home as prayer reminders.

Ask each student to pray a sentence prayer, thanking God for one need He met.

When this thanksgiving time is over, close the class in prayer. Ask God to remind students of His goodness to them—especially when they start to envy someone else or feel like stealing something. Thank God that in Him we can find true contentment.