

#6: Do Not Murder - The Ten Commandments

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Step 1: Lesson Goals

Goals:

- **Affective:** Students will reflect on the importance of valuing life and appreciating the preciousness of each moment.
- **Behavioral:** Students will develop strategies to increase the quality of their lives and make mundane moments more meaningful.
- **Cognitive:** Students will critically analyze the impact of technology on their ability to be fully present in their lives and reflect on the ethical implications of the expanded interpretation of the commandment "do not murder."

Audience:

Middle or high school students

Materials:

- Video: ["#6: Do Not Murder | The Ten Commandments"](#)
- [Picture of students on their phones](#)

Essential Questions/Big Ideas:

1. How might we increase the quality of our lives, when our time in this world is so limited?

1. The root of the commandment to value life stems from recognizing the *Tzelem Elokim* (Divine image) inherent in each person

- 2.** How can we transform mundane moments into more meaningful ones?
- 3.** How does technology impact our ability to be fully present in our lives?

- 2.** True living is about the quality of our lives.
- 3.** Being mindful that there will be a "last time" for every one of our experiences can help us view life's more mundane moments with more meaning and appreciation.

Step 2: Learning Plan

Hook/Trigger: (10 minutes)

- Share excerpts from the video ["#6: Do Not Murder | The Ten Commandments"](#) (from the beginning to 2:16, and then from 4:08 until 7:20) with the students.
- After watching the video, ask the students the following questions:
 - Why do you think life sometimes feels like it flies by?
 - How can we slow down and make our lives feel longer?

Learning Activities: (20 minutes)

1. Activity #1: The last time meditation (10 minutes)

- Explain the concept of "the last time" meditation, where students view an experience as if it is the last time they're doing it.
- Have students choose an activity from their daily lives (e.g., driving a car, speaking to a grandparent, spending time with classmates, having a family dinner).
- Instruct students to practice the "last time" meditation for that chosen activity and journal about their experience.
- Conduct a class discussion based on the following questions:

- What did you notice differently about the activity when doing it with the "last time" meditation?
- How did it change the quality of what you were doing?
- How can we be more present in important moments in our daily lives and have a greater appreciation for these opportunities without feeling overwhelmed?

2. Activity #2: The impact of technology (10-15 minutes)

- Show the [picture of students on their phones](#) and initiate a discussion:
 - Do you see anything problematic about this picture? Why or why not?
 - Does it seem similar or different to how you and your friends interact in your free time?
- Connect this discussion back to the theme of the commandment and increasing the quality of our lives. Ask students to share how much time they spend on their phones or devices per week.
- Challenge students to go on a social-media or phone "diet" for an hour each day, where they put away their phones and are fully present with their friends or family. After the challenge, debrief with the students:
 - What was hard about not having your phones during this time?
 - What was easier or more enjoyable?
 - Would you do this again voluntarily?
- Alternatively, challenge students to use an app that monitors their phone usage for a week. Ask students to reflect on their findings:
 - Are you surprised by the amount of time you actually spent on your devices?
 - Was it more or less than you expected?
 - Is this something you would like to work on?

Reflection: (5 minutes)

Ask students to respond to one of the following questions in writing or through class discussion:

- Share a time in your life that felt like it flew by when you wished it would have lasted longer. What made that moment special?
- Do we fully appreciate the special nature of these moments while they are happening?
- How can we be more present in those moments and make their impact "last longer"?

Step 3: Assessment

Checking for Understanding: (5 minutes)

Ask students to choose one of the following questions to answer:

- How can we increase the quality of our lives when our time in this world is limited?
- Reflecting on the impact of technology, how does our reliance on phones and devices impact the quality of our own lives?

Additional activities and questions (time permitting or to be completed outside class or in place of previous activities)

Materials:

- Printout or slide with [quotes from Our Town](#)

Learning Activities

1. **Activity #1: Our Town: (15 minutes)** *Note: This can be done as an interdisciplinary activity with an English class.*

Have your students reflect on the [quotes](#) below from Thornton Wilder's iconic play "[Our Town](#)", which focuses on how human beings often don't appreciate the preciousness of life and the beauty of its mundane moments, until it is too late. Then, discuss with your students:

- What are the most important moments in our lives? Is it the one-in-a-lifetime special events or the ordinary day-to-day activities?
- How might we better appreciate life's mundane moments and the power they have to be meaningful and transformative?

Quote #1: *Emily: "I can't go on. It goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another. I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed. Take me back -- up the hill -- to my grave. But first: Wait! One more look. Good-bye , Good-bye world. Good-bye, Grover's Corners....Mama and Papa. Good-bye to clocks ticking....and Mama's sunflowers. And food and coffee. And new ironed dresses and hot baths....and sleeping and waking up. **Oh, earth, you are too wonderful for anybody to realize you. Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it--every, every minute?"***

Quote #2: *"Yes, now you know. Now you know! That's what it was to be alive. To move about in a cloud of ignorance; to go up and down trampling on the feelings of those...of those about you. To spend and waste time as though you had a million years. To be always at the mercy of one self-centered passion, or another. Now you know -- that's the happy*

existence you wanted to go back to. Ignorance and blindness.”

2. Activity #2: *Tzelem Elokim* or the Divine Image: (10 minutes)

The Tanakh ([Genesis 9:6](#)) connects the prohibition on murder with everyone being created in the Divine Image or *Tzelem Elokim*.

- Why do you think the Torah links these two concepts?
- How might meditating on the fact that everyone is created in God's image impact the way you treat people in your daily life?
- What are times when you find it easier or harder to see people's Divine Image?
- What are steps you can take practically to focus more on seeing everyone's Divine image?