Introduction to The Ten Commandments

This was a collaborative learning experience for our Nursery, led by Sue Thomson, Children’s Minister, St Columba’s Church and our Primary 7 teacher, Kara McCurrach.

Our World War One context was for the whole school. It was a context that engaged the parents and wider community. It was a context where specialists were able to share their expertise to develop the children’s learning further.

Primary 7 explored the Ten Commandments. If everyone had followed the Ten Commandments would World War One have happened? What commandments would you make to prevent another war? Why did God not stop the war? Is all killing wrong? There were big questions and big answers!

The pupils shared their learning and reflections at a school open day where parents were invited to take part in several reflective stations. The engagement of the pupils was marked, partly because of the whole school involvement and their very active role as participants.

Overview of the four sessions
Session 1 Exploring the Ten Commandments
Session 2 If we followed the Ten Commandments, how different would the world be?
Session 3 War - right or wrong?
Session 4 Reflect and respond on the big questions that have been raised

Extension sessions
1. Literacy – write an account of God giving the Ten Commandments.
2. Literacy – consider how the Ten Commandments were broken in WW1.
3. Quick thinking – If you could make one rule what would it be?

Bible Passage: Exodus 19, 20:1-21, 24:12-18, 32.
**Question Chart and God Chart**
Throughout the sessions, the pupils reflected using a Question Chart and a God Chart. The Question Chart allowed the pupils to write their questions about the different areas being covered and the God Chart allowed them to consider what they had learnt and what the Bible had taught them about God.

![Image of a Question Chart and God Chart]

**RME - Significant aspects of learning**

**Learning about religion and morality:**
Recognising religion as a significant factor which has shaped our social, political and spiritual heritage
Investigating religious beliefs, values, issues, traditions and practices through a range of primary and secondary sources
Being able to describe and explain features of moral issues and moral decision making.

**Learning from religion and morality:**
Appreciating the importance of respect for the beliefs, values and traditions of others and being able to demonstrate this
Developing skills and attributes to make well-judged moral and ethical decisions and to justify personal beliefs and values
Engaging in a process of personal reflection leading to a deeper understanding of personal beliefs and ideas about meaning, value and purpose in life.

**Experiences and Outcomes**
Through investigating and reflecting upon biblical and other Christian stories, I can show my understanding of these stories.

RME 2-01a
I can show understanding of Christian beliefs and explore the similarities and differences between these and my developing beliefs.

RME 2-01c
I can share my developing views about values such as fairness and equality and love, caring, sharing and human rights.

RME 2-02b
I am developing respect for others and my understanding of their beliefs and values.

RME 2-07a
I am developing an increasing awareness and understanding of my own beliefs and I put them into action in positive ways.

RME 2-08a
I can explain why different people think that values such as honesty, respect and compassion are important, and I show respect for others.

RME 2-09c
Session One - Exploring the Ten Commandments

Resources
Power Point - Israelites and Exodus
Story of the Ten Commandments
Variety of different Bibles

Learning Intentions

Outline for the session

1. Introduction with pupils - ‘What can you tell me about the Bible? What do you already know?’ Run through story of Israelites and Exodus to set the context using power point.

2. Story tell the Ten Commandments. Give pupils time to read the story in the Bible by themselves - different versions - Children’s Bible, Graphic Bible, ‘real’ Bible, online.

3. Fill in ‘Question’ and ‘God Charts’.

Reflection after the lesson

This lesson worked well. The children had loads of questions. It would have been nice to have time to answer them all as they were asking! (Sue - Chaplain)

Great do to a summary. It’s surprising how much children remember. Good to explore different Bibles. Active retell great. (Kara - teacher)
Session 2 - If everyone followed the Ten Commandments, how different would the world be?

Resources
Commandment Cards

Outline for the session
1. Play the “Top Five game. Divide the group into teams. Give each team a set of the commandment cards. Give the teams two minutes to read and sort out the top five commandments for each category below. On a flip chart, keep score for each commandment, giving a point every time it features in a top five. Don’t worry if the ridiculous ones score high – this is to be expected.

- The top five commandments I should live by to make the world a better place.
- The top five commandments other people should live by to make the world a better place.
- The top five commandments everyone in the world throughout history should live by to make the world a better place.
- The top five commandments that show us the best way to live.

Declare which commandments are the top five overall. If it hasn’t arisen already, point out that some people think God gave his Ten Commandments to make life miserable and restricted. Explain, however, that the Bible says that God was really trying to show his people the best way to live – just like the best way to use a new gadget is to follow the maker’s instructions so you get to know all its cool features and don’t break it. God shows us how to love him and other people. He also gave good advice for all people everywhere, throughout history.

2. Still in their groups, challenge the young people to list the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses.

3. Now list the top five commandments that you think were broken in the lead up to WW1 (and therefore contributed to it starting). List the top five commandments that you think were broken during the war. What ten laws would you write to ensure our world is a better place/to stop wars.

4. Fill in our “question” and “God charts”.

Reflection after the lesson:

Again this lesson worked well. We had an excellent discussion – it could have gone on a long time! We didn’t have time to write our own ten laws during this lesson. (Sue - Chaplain)

This really got the children thinking about their priorities in life. Great to relate it to war. They could really think about “broken” rules/commandments. (Kara – Teacher)
Session 3 - Is War Right or Wrong

Resources
White and Red flags
Additional Bible Verses

Outline for the session

1. Right or wrong? Read out these statements to students. Do they agree or disagree?

   You should never pick a fight with somebody. If you have a problem, you should sort it out in other ways.

   It is OK to pick a fight with somebody who is threatening you and your friends (even if they have not done anything yet).

   It is OK to pick a fight with people so that others will respect you

   It is OK to fight back if somebody is bullying you

   It is OK to pick a fight with somebody if they are bullying your mate

   It is OK to pick a fight with somebody if they have something that you want.

   Reflect: Which students said it was OK to fight in some situations but not in others? Which criteria made it acceptable to fight?

2. For or against? Give out red and white ‘flags’ to each student. Read out the Additional Bible verses from the resources. Each offers key principles to be considered on the question of whether or not war is supported in the Bible. Students should indicate whether they believe the passage supports the argument for war (red flag), disagrees with the argument for war (white flag), or could be seen equally for and against the argument for war (both flags).

3. Visit and chat from Louis Kinsey (Local Minister and TA chaplain) – should Christians go to war?

4. Fill in our ‘Questions’ and ‘God Charts’.

Reflection after the lesson: This could have been two lessons. The pupils listened well and had lots of questions for Mr Kinsey (army chaplain). They would have benefitted from more time to discuss Christian viewpoints to war. We didn’t have time to fill in our charts. (Sue-Chaplain)

Children were fascinated meeting someone who had actually been to war. Right or Wrong cards really got them thinking. (Kara – Teacher)

Several ideas in Session 2 or 3 are from request.org.uk. Check there for further ideas.
Session 4 - Reflect and respond on the big questions that have been raised

Resources
Signs for Reflective Spaces

Overview of Session

Reflective Space – a place for the children to consider the big questions that the WW1 topic (and in particular the Ten Commandments) has raised. Not to provide answers but to allow the children to reflect and respond.

The idea is that the children move round the zones at their own pace. It’s a quiet but not silent activity. Music could be played in the background.

Zone 1 - Big questions

‘If God does exist what would you want to ask him? About war? About WW1? About peace? Or about something completely different?’

Write your questions down and pin it onto some plastic barbed wire.

Zone 2 - I will remember

‘What will you remember about WW1? What do you think is the most important thing we should remember?’

Write your answer on a poppy and plant it in our poppy field.

Zone 3 - New World

‘There is an incredible promise in the bible that God will create a new earth that will be free from death, sorrow, crying and pain. That all of these things will be gone forever.’

If you had the power to be able to make a ‘New World’, what would you keep the same? What would you change? What rules would you make?

Have some globes and posters for the pupils to write their answers on.
Zone 4 - Is war right or wrong?

‘There are lots of reasons why people think we should go to war, and lots of reasons why people think we shouldn’t. Take a piece of each colour of wool. Tie them together with a knot at one end. Now slowly and thoughtfully plait the three colours together.’

As you plait the red think about the reasons for war.
As you plait the white think about the reasons why we shouldn’t go to war.
As you plait the green pray for the people who have to make the decision.
When you have plaited the whole length, knot the ends together to secure it.
You may like to use this as a wristband or bookmark to remind you of these prayers.

The coloured lengths of wool will be laid out in separate baskets with explanation of the colours (quotes/images/reasons for and against war) on appropriately coloured posters beside them. Followed by a question and answer time.

Reflection after the lesson:

The reflective activities worked well. Surprisingly the pupils didn’t know how to plait so that activity may need rethought!

Again, we had to stop our question and answer time as we ran out of time. (Sue – Chaplain)

Effective, as the questions were well thought out and varied. (Kara - Teacher)