

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 49

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 51: *What is forbidden in the second commandment?*

ANSWER: The second commandment forbiddeth the worshiping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in his word.

MONDAY

Praise: Sing Psalm 86B

Scripture: Read Deuteronomy 13:6-18

Key Thought: *The 2nd commandment forbids all participation in and toleration of false worship.*

Questions:

- ☞ Which is more important: family loyalty or obedience to God?
- ☞ How does this apply when it comes to matters of worship?
- ☞ Why is it such a strong temptation for us to go along with what our families and friends are doing in worship?
- ☞ What should we do instead?

Prayer

Notes: We turn now from the positive application of the 2nd commandment, to discuss what it forbids. First among those things prohibited by the 2nd commandment is participation in and toleration of false worship. The *Larger Catechism*, Question 109, states it this way: “all devising, counseling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself,” and “tolerating a false religion.” Among the texts of Scripture listed in support of this answer is Deuteronomy 13:6-12, in which God warns His people against participation in false worship in response to family pressure and even commands them to expose and prosecute close friends or relatives who worshiped falsely according to Israel’s strict civil laws. The clear message is that in worship, as in all other matters of conformity to God’s Word, neither family loyalty or the bonds of friendship are to be placed above obedience to the Lord’s own commands. Any invitation to participate in worship that God has not instituted must be declined and every effort made to better instruct the errant worshiper in the truth. Our desire to remain in favor with men, no matter what relation they are to us, must never trump our desire to please and honor God through obedience.

TUESDAY

Praise: Sing Psalm 86B

Scripture: Read Exodus 32:1-6

Key Thought: *The 2nd commandment forbids the making and using of images in religious worship.*

Questions:

- ☪ In Exodus 32:1, what did the people ask Aaron to do?
- ☪ What did Aaron make? How did Aaron introduce his idol to the people? (see vv. 4-5)
- ☪ May images be used as means of instruction or to move our emotions in worship? Why or why not?
- ☪ May images be placed in churches for beauty and decoration?
- ☪ How does the spiritual nature of Christian worship argue against the use of images and outward forms in worship?

Prayer

Notes: In addition to participating in and tolerating false worship, the *Larger Catechism* says that the 2nd commandment forbids: “the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever; all worshiping of it, or God in it or by it; the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them.” Sinful man, prone as he is toward idolatry, is quick to latch onto any pretense for using visible images of his own invention in the worship of God. Often these images are used in the name of the true God, despite the fact that He never commanded their creation or use. Such was the case with Aaron’s golden calf, which was presented to the children of Israel with these words: “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!... Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.” God has not ordained the use of man-made images in connection with His pure worship under any pretense whatsoever. Some promote the use of visible images for the purpose of instruction, emotional appeal, or even beauty and decoration within the church. Against this it must be maintained that God has not appointed an earthly and physical worship in His Church, but a spiritual and heavenly worship, centered around His own Word and Spirit. It is the living Word of God that instructs, exhorts, convicts, stirs, and even decorates the service of worship which He has instituted.



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 86B

Scripture: Read Colossians 2:16-23

Key Thought: *The 2nd commandment forbids all insistence on outward forms of worship.*

Questions:

- ☪ What false teaching was Paul warning the Colossians against?

- ☞ Why were some people insisting that certain outward actions and ceremonies had to be observed?
- ☞ People often portray the Reformed view of worship as “restrictive” of individual freedom. How do Paul’s warnings answer that charge?

Prayer

Notes: Also included in the *Larger Catechism’s* list of things forbidden by the 2nd commandment are “all superstitious devices,” by which are meant any reliance on outward forms as though they were necessary to worship or had in themselves any power to bless the worshipers. In Colossians 2, Paul warns his readers against certain false teachers who were insisting upon the necessity of a variety of outward forms or worship. Included among these were food regulations, the observance of special holy days, bowing to angels, and asceticism. Paul calls all of these things “self-imposed religion” because God had nowhere commanded them among His people. All such outward inventions of men are merely different forms of bondage to the flesh. It is argued that the Reformed view of worship, because of its emphasis on doing only what God commands to the exclusion of all else, is restrictive of individual freedom. It is interesting to note that Paul warns his readers that participation in the many “creative” expressions of worship being pushed by these false teachers would amount to “subjecting [them]selves to regulations.” It is not those who follow the commandments of God that are in bondage, but those who insist upon the regulations of men, and in so doing, elevate their own opinions to the status of divine command and presume that their own inventions are a means of grace.

 THURSDAY

Praise: Sing Psalm 86B

Scripture: Read Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 12:28-32

Key Thought: *The 2nd commandment forbids adding to or taking away from the worship that God has commanded in His word.*

Questions:

- ☞ What is the “regulative principle of worship”?
- ☞ Where is the regulative principle stated in the Bible?
- ☞ What does this principle presuppose about man? About God?

Prayer

Notes: According to the *Larger Catechism* the 2nd commandment also forbids “corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretense whatsoever.” This application is a formulation of the regulative principle of wor-

ship, which states that God's commands alone are to be followed in worship, without any addition or subtraction from their substance. This principle is stated clearly in both Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32, and finds expressions in many other texts of Scripture. The regulative principle of worship presupposes man's tendency to "freelance" when it comes to worshipping God, and provides a clear warning against this. Further, it presupposes God's transcendent majesty, as seen in His jealousy to be worshiped with humble reverence according to His own revealed will.



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 86B

Scripture: Read Matthew 22:1-7

Key Thought: *The 2nd commandment forbids all laxity in or opposition to the true worship that God has appointed.*

Questions:

- ☪ What was the attitude of those originally invited to the king's wedding feast? What did this reveal about their view of the king?
- ☪ In what ways can we be careless or apathetic in our obedience to God's commands for worship?
- ☪ In what ways can we be hostile toward God's commands?

Prayer

Notes: Finally, the *Larger Catechism* states that the 2nd commandment forbids "simony; sacrilege; all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed." The common thread among this string of offenses is a contempt for God's revealed ordinances, whether expressed through open opposition or apathetic negligence. What is of greatest importance to God is to be of greatest importance to His creatures. To respond to the commands of God with apathy, like those in the parable who "made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business," shows great contempt for the Lord, as though what He counts as important is not worthy of our time or attention. From this, we ought learn to give ourselves to the pursuit of God's appointed worship with great care and fervency, and to follow His commands with humble hearts, not putting our own whims above His will.



Note: Only five lessons per week are included. You are encouraged to lead your family in worship seven days a week. On weekends, you may want to review or build upon the lessons from the previous week, discuss the sermon from Sunday morning, or work on questions from the Catechism or memory verses. These lesson suggestions are intended to provide a simple framework for parents to build upon. You are not limited to this content. The habit of morning and evening family worship is the biblical ideal. We hope you can use these lessons as a starting point for the development of a blessed practice of family worship in your home.