

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 47

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 49: *Which is the second commandment?*

ANSWER: The second commandment is, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

MONDAY

Praise: Sing Psalm 94A

Scripture: Read Exodus 20:4-6

Key Thought: *The 2nd commandment addresses the content of worship.*

Questions:

- ☞ Does this commandment forbid all making of pictures or statues?
- ☞ What specific kinds of pictures and statues does it forbid?
- ☞ What specific uses of such pictures and statues does it forbid?
- ☞ Does this commandment show us that the way that men approach God is important to Him?
- ☞ Does this commandment include other acts of worship besides the use of carved or painted images?

Prayer

Notes: We now turn to the 2nd commandment. The 1st commandment forbids worshipping a false god. This commandment forbids worshipping the true God in a false manner. We saw that the 1st commandment addresses the proper object of worship, which is the true and living God alone. The 2nd commandment shows us the proper content of worship that is acceptable to the true God. It is not only important who we worship, but how we worship. The commandment before us speaks of the specific activity of making a carved image or likeness of anything that is in heaven or on earth or in the sea for the purpose of bowing down to worship them. We are not to imagine that all carved images, paintings, or even photographs are forbidden by this law, since Scripture includes proper examples of such images (Matt. 22:20-21; Ex. 25:18; 1 Kings 7:23-25). What is clearly condemned here is

the making of any image as a representation of God, either to worship it as God or to use it as an aid in approaching Him. The principle behind this command is the purity of worship—that the manner in which the creature worships is of great importance to the Creator. God has not left man to develop the manner of worship according to his own imagination or creativity. This is why the writers of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, in applying this commandment, wrote: “the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.”



TUESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 94A

Scripture: Read Deuteronomy 4:15-20; Romans 1:18-25

Key Thought: *Sinful men are prone to corrupt God's worship.*

Questions:

- ☞ For what purpose was man created?
- ☞ How was this purpose distorted by man's fall into sin?
- ☞ What tendencies are warned against in Deuteronomy 4:15-20?
- ☞ What reason does Paul give for man's tendency to worship images?
- ☞ Do believers continue to struggle with this tendency after conversion? How?
- ☞ How does devising ways of worshiping not commanded in Scripture express this tendency?

Prayer

Notes: Man was created to glorify (worship) God and enjoy Him forever. This God-given purpose was distorted by sin, however, which turned the heart of man toward self-worship and self-enjoyment. False worship is, at its heart, thinly veiled self-glorification. The tendency to invent forms of worship—whether carved idols or other innovations—is rooted deep within the rebel heart of fallen man. The struggle against the tendency toward self-worship does not end at conversion. Even the believer must resist the temptation to admire the work of his own hands and present it to God as acceptable worship. Thomas Peck reminds us that “Man...is incompetent to devise modes of worship, because he knows not what modes are best adapted to express the truth or the emotions which the truth is suited to produce.” As long as man remains a sinner, he cannot trust himself to devise acceptable means for approaching God which are free of self-indulgence.



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 94A

Scripture: Read Isaiah 44:12-20

Key Thought: *The worship of God according to man's imagination is indefensible.*

Questions:

- ☞ What is so amazing about the scenario presented by Isaiah?
- ☞ Is it possible to make a true physical image of God? Explain.
- ☞ What limitations does an image have? Does God have these?
- ☞ Does the Bible ever tell men to devise ways of approaching God?
- ☞ How should God be approached in worship?

Prayer

Notes: Isaiah 44 presents a ridiculous scenario in which a man divides a tree into different sections, using some of the wood for fuel to warm himself and cook his food, and some of it to make a god to worship. The prophet paints a vivid portrait of the foolishness of bowing down to a block of wood. Yet this is precisely what man does when he makes his own creativity the focus of his worship. In truth it is impossible for man to make a true representation of God since man himself, and the materials around him, are all finite and material, while God is invisible and infinite. Some would suggest that it is possible to make a true image of Christ, who appeared in physical form, but there are serious problems with this as well. First, the Bible gives us no physical description of Jesus, so we cannot make a truthful representation. Second, even if we could make a physical image of Christ, we could never picture His divine nature. We would have an incomplete (and therefore misleading) picture of Christ. All human innovations in worship amount to different ways for man to bow to the work of his own hands and thus to re-invent God according to his own preferences. God never instructs sinful men to devise ways of approaching Him. He is Spirit, and He must be worshiped in Spirit and in truth according to His Word, not according to man's limited ideas.



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 94A

Scripture: Read Exodus 20:4-6; 34:12-17

Key Thought: *God is jealous for the purity of worship.*

Questions:

- ☞ What does it mean to be jealous?
- ☞ Why does God say that those who worship the work of their own hands "hate" Him?
- ☞ Why does the Bible compare false worship to adultery?
- ☞ How do we demonstrate faithfulness to God?

Prayer

Notes: The reason advanced in the 2nd commandment for refraining from the use and manufacture of images is the jealousy of God for worship that is pure. We tend to think of jealousy as a sinful emotion, but it is clearly not sinful in God. When the Bible says that God is jealous, it means that He will not tolerate unfaithfulness and is deeply offended by false worship. In fact, God declares that those who pretend to worship Him through the work of their own hands actually demonstrate their hatred for Him. If they loved Him, they would keep His commandments. False worship is compared in Scripture to adultery, because in it the heart fixes upon another object of worship, namely Self, who created the innovations. True faithfulness is demonstrated through cheerful obedience.



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 94A

Scripture: Read Exodus 20:4-6; Proverbs 22:6

Key Thought: *The purity of worship has far-reaching consequences.*

Questions:

- ☞ What does God threaten to those who hate Him?
- ☞ How does the unfaithfulness of those who hate God affect their children and grandchildren?
- ☞ What does God promise to those who love Him?
- ☞ What are you teaching your children about worship?

Prayer

Notes: The 2nd commandment concludes with a warning and a promise. Those who demonstrate their hatred of God through worshiping the work of their own hands are assured that He will visit their iniquity upon their children to the third and fourth generation. By this is meant that false worship practices ingrained into the minds of future generations will bring consequences to them as well. Worship leads to tradition and faulty tradition is not easily shaken loose. Yet God promises mercy to thousands who love Him and keep His commandments. The abundance of mercy overshadows the previously threatened judgment and encourages our hearts to pursue obedience to God's commands in worship with gladness and to anticipate His rich blessings according to His promise.



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.