

COMMANDMENTS

No Other Gods (Exodus 20:1-3)

Bottom Line: Worshiping God alone is not only our proper duty to God, but also to ourselves.

What is something that, when you share it with others, you enjoy it more? What is something that you absolutely do NOT want to share with someone else?

From a young age we are taught to always share what we have with others. This is a good thing. We shouldn't be so attached to our possessions that we aren't willing to allow others to partake in them should they have the need. We should be willing to share our time, our resources, and our space with others. But on the other hand, there are some things that this advice doesn't apply to. Some things are not meant to be shared: confidential information, love between a husband and wife, etc. This is true of mankind, and it's also true of God.

What are some things that God freely shares with us? What are some things that God refuses to share with us?

Read Exodus 20:1-3

The first commandment that God gives Israel is the most important: "you shall have no other gods before me." In other words, all of our worship, all of our praise, all of our devotion is to God alone—no one and nothing else. God will **not** share His glory with another (see Isaiah 48:9-11).

What would it say about God if He were to share His glory with another? Is this the kind of God you would want to worship? Why or why not? Likewise, what does it say about God if WE give glory to another?

God's glory, if it is to be properly conveyed and rejoiced in, must be kept exclusive to Him alone.

Read Exodus 20:2 again. Why do you think God prefaced the first commandment with a reminder about Egypt?

While in slavery in Egypt, the Israelites had been immersed in a culture where other gods were worshiped and honored over and above the God of Israel. And in fact, a big reason for the severity of the ten plagues that God brought upon Egypt was to show His superiority over "all the gods of Egypt" (Exodus 12:12). Having lived in such an environment for over 400 years, it's very possible that the Israelites were tempted to worship other gods, but if these gods were in control, what had they ever done for the Israelites but lead them into bondage? In verse two, God was setting the proper context in which Israel was to understand the commandments He was about to give them: they come from a God who, having delivered them from slavery, was already committed to their freedom and flourishing before they ever had the chance to obey Him. Therefore, God was not expecting Israel to abandon all other gods and worship Him so

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that they could *become* His people, but because they *already were* His people. He was inviting Israel to align their lives with the reality of which He had called them as His treasured possession (Exodus 19:5).

Like the Israelites in Egypt, what are some other “gods” that our culture tries to convince us are worthy of our worship?

Read Job 31:24, 28. What does this “god” look like today? What does the worship of this “god” look like?

Read Habakkuk 1:11. What does this “god” look like today? What does the worship of this “god” look like?

Read Philippians 3:19. What does this “god” look like today? What does the worship of this “god” look like?

What are some subtle indications that these “gods” may be gaining a more prominent place in our life than we realize? Why is it sometimes easy for us to be convinced that these “gods” are better to us than the one true God? In reality, how are these “gods” actually harming us?

Augustine of Hippo, a 4th Century Christian saint, said “our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You, O God.” Augustine understood that nothing in this world could satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts except the One who created our hearts. To give ourselves to anything other than God is to set our hearts on a path of restlessness that leads only to burnout, exhaustion, frustration, and despair. But to set our affections on God, and God alone, is to restore our hearts to their intended function, leading to fulfillment, satisfaction, and meaningfulness. Therefore, this first commandment, to have no other gods before the Lord, has a double purpose: 1) to ensure that God receives the honor and glory He rightfully deserves, and 2) to prevent us from misplacing our priorities and therefore leading us to live wasted, restless lives. Here again, like we’ve seen many times before, our joy and God’s glory are not at odds with one another.

How is it a waste to live a life that is not completely devoted to God?

It is important to remember that this commandment was given to people who were already redeemed by God. Every believer faces the temptation to worship the true God or the gods of this world. How have you seen this play out in your own life?

Reflection: Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

In 1 John 5:20, Jesus Christ is mentioned as “the true God and eternal life.” If we are to be faithful to the first commandment, we must worship Christ as savior. Have you done

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this? Have you renounced all other allegiances and placed your hope solely and firmly in the one true God? Are you searching for meaning, satisfaction, and fulfillment in anything other than Christ? If so, until you repent of this idolatry, you will never find the rest you are looking for.

If you have repented and trusted in Christ, what subtle temptations to worship other “gods” does this world offer you that you have to fight against? Is it the temptation to trust and love your money or your possessions? Is it the temptation to trust and love power, authority, or reputation? Is it the temptation to love your children or your spouse more than God? Is it the temptation to pursue your own goals, plans, and desires for your life at the expense of God’s goals, plans, and desires for your life? What specifically does repentance from these sins look like for you? How will you find peace, rest, and fulfillment in God rather than what the world throws at you?

What are some ways that you can show that God is your priority over any other worldly thing? What does it look like for God to be a priority over your family? Over your finances? Over your career? Over your relationships? Over this small group? How do you envision your life being different if you were to truly give God the primary place of worship in each of these areas? Now, what will you do to align your life with that vision?