

## THE SECOND COMMANDMENT: MAKE NO IDOLS AND DON'T WORSHIP THEM

### God's Word:

"YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF AN IDOL, OR ANY LIKENESS OF WHAT IS IN HEAVEN ABOVE OR ON THE EARTH BENEATH OR IN THE WATER UNDER THE EARTH. YOU SHALL NOT WORSHIP THEM OR SERVE THEM; FOR I, THE LORD YOUR GOD, AM A JEALOUS GOD, VISITING THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS ON THE CHILDREN, ON THE THIRD AND THE FOURTH GENERATIONS OF THOSE WHO HATE ME, BUT SHOWING LOVINGKINDNESS TO THOUSANDS, TO THOSE WHO LOVE ME AND KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS."

--EXODUS 20:4-6



### Breaking It Down:

It's hard to talk about the second commandment without touching on the first and third commandments because all three are interconnected. The first commandment forbids us from having any other gods. This one, the second, forbids us from making idols—objects to worship—in the image of things that God created. The third one forbids us from taking the Lord's name in vain (treating it as meaningless). Clearly, all three focus on our relationship with God. They all have to do with how God should be treated and make it clear that He alone should be revered.



Notice their position in the list of the Ten Commandments. They are numbers 1, 2 and 3 and come before the commandments that address how we should act in relationship to other humans. I would venture to say that without keeping the first three commandments first, we

won't be able to keep the rest of them.

With that being said let's dig a little deeper into the second commandment. The Message translation makes our text easy to grasp: "No carved gods of any size, shape, or form of anything whatever, whether of things that fly or walk or swim. Don't bow down to them and don't serve them because *I* am GOD, your God, and I'm a most jealous God, punishing the children for any sins their parents pass on to them to the third, and yes, even to the fourth generation of those who hate me. But I'm unswervingly loyal to the thousands who love me and keep my commandments."



A few phrases stick out when reading this: "*I am God, your God*" and "*I'm a most jealous God.*"

Doing a study on what God calls Himself, we see His self-description in the following verses:

your shield (Genesis 15:1)  
the Lord (Genesis 15:7, Exodus 6:2, 6:6, 6:8, 6:29, 7:5, 7:17, 10:2, 12:12, 14:4; Leviticus 19:12, 19:14, 19:16, 19:18; over 157 times throughout the Bible)  
God Almighty (Genesis 17:1)  
with you (Genesis 26:24, 28:15, Joshua 3:7, Jeremiah 1:8; Isaiah 41:10)  
who I am (Exodus 3:14)  
your share and your inheritance (Numbers 18:20)  
He (Isaiah 41:4, 43:10, 43:13)  
God (Isaiah 43:12)  
merciful (Jeremiah 3:12)  
the Sovereign Lord (Ezekiel 23:49, 24:27, 28:24)  
very jealous (Exodus 20:5, Deuteronomy 5:9, Zechariah 1:14, 8:2)

When doing a word study on the jealousy of God, we discover two verses:

- 1) Exodus 34:14 – "Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."
- 2) Deuteronomy 4:24 – "For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."

The English word jealous is translated from the Hebrew word qanna.' This word is only used for God and has an undertone of spiritual infidelity or spiritual unfaithfulness. God's jealousy can be seen within His relationship with the people of Israel throughout the Old Testament. (For more details, read all of the books of the prophets.)

It's easy to see this roller coaster relationship between God and Israel throughout Israel's time wandering in the desert. The need for these commandments was illustrated shortly after God had given the Ten Commandments to Moses and the people of Israel. In Exodus 32, while

Moses was communing with God, the people immediately violate both this commandment and the first one. They took their gold jewelry, melted it down and fashioned a calf from those metals and then the people declared it their god and worshipped it. They even credited this golden statue with having delivered them out of bondage in Egypt! (Exodus 32:4)

God said there would be consequences for violating this commandment, for crafting idols and worshipping them, and that those consequences would be suffered for generations beyond the guilty parties.

However, a simple allegiance to God and recognition of two facts - Who He is and that He is a jealous God - should lead us to bow down and worship Him alone for He alone is worthy.



### **Living It:**

In preparing this lesson, I came across the following quote from Charles Misner, a scientific specialist in general relativity theory that explains Einstein's possible dilemma with religion:

“The design of the universe ... is very magnificent and shouldn't be taken for granted. In fact, I believe that is why Einstein had so little use for organized religion, although he strikes me as a basically very religious man. He must have looked at what the preachers said about God and felt that they were blaspheming. He had seen much more majesty than they have ever imagined, and they were just not talking about the real thing. My guess is that he simply felt that religions he'd run across did not have proper respect... for the author of the universe.”



As I meditated on this quote, I found it to be true in my life. I do not worship God as I should, for who He is. It is so much easier to worship Him for what He has done, and to focus on His provision for us, and miss who He is altogether. When our focus is on the created instead of the Creator, on the blessings instead of the Source, we are in idolatry because we are putting those things in front of God. It is easy to slip further from focusing on who He is when our focus is constantly on what we can get from Him and what He can bless us with – both of which are a focus on ourselves.

In John Piper's book, "Let the Nations be Glad!" he makes this provocative statement: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him" (p. 31). This gives us a little

insight into why God is a Jealous God. He knows that we can only be satisfied in Him. That is why He is jealous. He alone deserves all glory, honor, reverence and worship, now and forevermore.

Instead, we have crafted modern-day idols. Oh, they may not look like items from creation. They may not be golden calves or goats or pigs or birds or fish that we bow down to, but they are idols just the same. Anything we put before God, anything that consumes our time, that becomes our priority, whatever we put first, if it is not our service and worship of God is an idol.

What comes first in your life? Is it pleasing God in every decision and action and glorifying Him in all you do? Or, could it be devoting every hour to your boyfriend or girlfriend? Yes, people can become idols in our lives. Could it be seeing your favorite sports team every time they play and seeking to learn every fact about the team's star? Or maybe it's some singer or actor you spend all of your time obsessing about? They have become your idol. Or, is it that new electronic game that you love, or surfing the Internet, or putting time with friends or TV or your car before your time with God?

Our idols are all around us. We just need to identify them. Evaluate how you spend your time. Take note of what gets the biggest chunk of it and you will have found an idol. We were created by our Creator to worship. If we don't worship Him, we'll worship something. This week, take an inventory of how you're spending your time and you'll discover what you value most. If it's not God, confess this to Him and realign your priorities. Otherwise, as God said, the consequences will not only be yours but will stretch down the line.

Don't leave God feeling jealous about your life but show Him the honor, glory and reverence He deserves.



**Understanding It:**

- 1) What are some of the words God uses to describe Himself?
- 2) Why is He a jealous God?
- 3) What occupies the majority of your time and thoughts in a week? Don't just say school because we know even in school, your mind can be on a host of things. Try this week to identify the priority of your life. If it's not God, ask His forgiveness and realign your priorities.
- 4) What is one way you can adjust your day to spend time praising and worshipping God throughout your week?



### **Doing It!**

This week, take time to review the descriptions God uses for Himself and meditate on who He is. Begin each morning with Him in prayer, focusing on praising Him for who He is, not on your requests. Then, throughout the day, be ever-conscious of His presence. Praise Him and worship Him for who He is! Honor and glorify His name! Psalm 19:1b says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.” The heavens already declare it. It’s your turn to glorify His name. So what are you waiting for? Just do it!

