

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 2

God and God Alone

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 20:2-3
Subject:	How we should respond to the LORD our God who has brought us out of bondage
Complement:	we should have no other gods before Him.
Exegetical idea:	We should have no other gods before the LORD our God who has brought us out of bondage.
Homiletical idea:	The LORD God, creator of the heavens and earth is saying to you, “I want to be <u>your</u> God!”
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to give the LORD God is rightful place as God their lives.

Introduction

I'm excited about this new series of messages on the 10 Commandments! There is a great deal of talk today about the 10 Commandments. Some say that these ten sayings are out-dated rules. Old-fashioned. Irrelevant. Others say that these ten sayings, written by God on tables of precious stone, are just as important as they were on the day that they were given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

In this sermon series, we are going to take a fresh look at the 10 commandments. We will discover that the 10 sayings are not a list of out-dated rules from a demanding Deity but rather they are words of blessing from our loving God. And we need to listen to these words of blessing.

So let's begin by looking at these 10 sayings in their context. The 10 commandments are recorded in the books of Moses, and referred to in other parts of the Old and New Testaments. The primary passage of Scripture that we are going to study today is Exodus 20. This is the most well-known passage that records the 10 commandments. Unfortunately, many people start reading a verse too late! They start reading in Exodus 20:3, “You shall have no other ...,” when

we need to start with Exodus 20:2. So take your Bible and open it to the second book of the Old Testament, Exodus, chapter 20. We'll start reading in Exodus 20:1 and I want you to pay special attention to Exodus 20:2 "....."

The words that we just read are crucially important if we are to understand the sayings that follow. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

For the Jews, Exodus 20:2 is so important that they consider this verse the first commandment, the first of the 10 sayings that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Most Christians do not view Exodus 20:2 as the first commandment but some scholars do suggest that Exodus 20:2 is actually part of the first commandment, recorded in Exodus 20:2-3.. In other words, some scholars suggest that the first commandment should read, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me."

You say, "I've never seen it written like that on all of the pictures of the 10 commandments." And you're right. Most of the time, people just start with Exodus 20:3, "Thou shalt have no other..., or You shall have no other..." Our sermon study group that meets every Wednesday evening agrees with those Bible scholars who assert that Exodus 20:2 should be considered as part of the first commandment. But we also want to suggest that Exodus 20:2 is part of the second commandment. And the third commandment. And the fourth commandment. Each of the ten commandments should be read in context like this: "I am the LORD your God....." Exodus 20:2 is a preface to all of these ten words of blessing. And the restatement of those commandments in Leviticus 19 supports that conclusion.

So whether you consider Exodus 20:2 as the first commandment or the vital preface of every saying that follows, it is certainly foundational to our understanding of the words that the LORD God gave to Moses on the mountain. “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” “I am the LORD your God! The One who rescued you. The One who brought you out of bondage.”

The LORD God had just delivered the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. For generations they had been used and abused, beaten down and humiliated. But now the LORD God has brought them out of bondage! He had used Moses to confront the stubborn and arrogant Pharaoh. The LORD God had opened the Red Sea and made a way of escape for His people. He had provided manna for them to eat and water for them to drink in the desert. To the children of Israel, He says, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”

But you say, “That was over 3,000 years ago. What does an event that happened over 3,000 years ago have to do with me today?” The answer is simple. The LORD God is still the One who brings His people out of bondage! We may not have been in bondage in Egypt. But we have been in bondage to sin. And the LORD God is the One who can bring us out of bondage and set us free. Is there someone here today who can bear witness that the LORD God has delivered you from bondage? Is there someone here today who can testify that the LORD God has set you free?

Fourteen hundred years after the LORD God gave these ten sayings to Moses on Mount Sinai, Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth and testified that He had also come to set the captives free. He set people free who were bound by Satan. He set people free who were bound

by destructive sinful habits. He set people free who were bound by death. And Jesus declared that if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed. So the LORD our God is still the One who is bringing us out of bondage, out of slavery!

And it is this LORD our God who gave the 10 sayings to Moses on Mount Sinai. He loves us. He is concerned about us. He wants to be our God. He wants us to recognize that we are His people. And what the LORD our God is about to share in the 10 sayings that follow must be understood in the context of that loving relationship. These 10 sayings are words of blessing from our loving God.

So let's look at the first saying that the LORD God wrote with His finger in the tables of precious stone: "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me." Why do you think that the LORD God chose as the first saying, "You shall have no other gods before Me"? Because this is our most important response once we recognize that He is our God!

Unfortunately, as sinful selfish human beings, we are constantly putting other beings, other things, other desires, ahead of God in their lives. In Exodus 32, we have a vivid example of how quickly people put "other gods" before the LORD God, Creator of heaven and earth. Look at the story recorded in Exodus 32, beginning with verse 1 "....."

The children of Israel were breaking several commandments that day. The 2nd commandment, the 3rd commandment, the 7th commandment, the 9th commandment. But they were also breaking the 1st commandment. They were calling a golden calf their god. And they were putting that god before the God of heaven.

Around the world, people choose a variety of gods to worship. We heard about the 100+

gods of Egypt last week. Aken and Aker, Ah-Heh, Ament, Ammit, Amun, Anuket...and that's just the "A"s! At the time that the 10 commandments were given to Moses on Mount Sinai, the Philistines were worshipping their fish god, Dagon. The Canaanites were worship Baal and Ashtoreth. The children of Israel were surrounded by nations who were worshipping a multitude of other gods besides the LORD God, creator of the heavens and the earth.

And there are still parts of our world where people embrace a multitude of gods. We have people watching and listening from all around the world. You are aware of the other gods that are worshiped in your culture. But what about us right here at Forest Lake Church? What about you? What about me? We don't have any other gods besides the God of heaven, do we? The answer to that question might surprise us!

Skit:

John: Time to get ready for the big date! Oh, boy. Am I excited?

God: John. Are you getting ready for church?! Are you going to spend time with Me today?

John: (shocked) Oh, good morning, Lord! How are you doing today?

God: I'm happy that we can spend some time together! I love you, my child.

John: Thanks, Lord. I love you too. But I've got a date today, Lord. She's really cute! There's something missing in my life and I think that she might be it!

God: You could invite her to come with you to our special time together! I'd like to spend time with her too!

John: I don't think so, Lord. I don't scare her away. Besides, we're going to a ball game! You know how much I love ball games!

God: Yes, John. I've noticed that. It seems that you're at a ball game almost every weekend. We're you watching ball games all last night!

John: (shocked) How did you know that? Oh, I forgot. You know everything. Well, my team is a having a great season. We might even win the World Series! It's a big deal, God.

God: It certainly is a big deal for you, John. It's taking most of your energy and most of your resources.

John: I haven't forgotten that all of my blessings come from you, Lord. I asked my sister to put a \$40 in the offering plate last week!

God: \$40!

John: Yes! \$40. I made a big sacrifice and went to a less expensive restaurant before the ball game last week.

God: I'm not looking for your money, John. I'm looking for you. I want to truly be your God.

John: I know, Lord. I know. But I've got to run now. But just to make you happy, I'll read one of the Bible texts from my morning devotional box:(Take a card out of your devotional box)

“You shall have no other gods before Me.” (Act surprised and shocked!)

We don't like to admit it, but we all have had times when we have put someone or something else before God. Isn't that true? And that is a breaking of the first commandment. Anyone or anything that we put first in our lives, before the LORD God, creator of the heavens and the earth, anything else or anyone else that we put first in our lives...that becomes our god.

So what is the most common god of our culture today that people put before the God of heaven? The answer is a 4-letter word in the English language. S-E-L-F. Self! Our neo-pagan culture says, “You are god. You are goddess. You are at the center. Everything revolves around you. Your desires. Your pleasures. Your wishes.” Forget about the first commandment given by the LORD God to Moses on Mount Sinai! You are your own god!

Putting self in the place of God is not a new idea. When Lucifer, one of the leading angels in heaven, decided to rebel against God, his driving desire was to put self before God. He determined that he would directly and deliberately break this first commandment. Listen to these words of Lucifer, recorded in Isaiah 14:12-14. “.....”

Did you notice who was #1? I will, I will, I will, I will, I will be like the Most High! It's painful to realize that I may have pushed God aside because I want to be #1. Lucifer, now called the Devil and Satan, wanted to put himself first. He wanted the place that belonged only to the LORD God. And so Lucifer rebelled against God and there was war in heaven. The book of Revelation records in Revelation 12:7-9, “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”

And even though Satan has been cast out of heaven, his rebellion has not ended. He is actively trying to seduce each one of us to join him in his rebellion...to join him in transgressing the commandments of God, especially the first commandment...to put self first, to make self our god.

But Satan doesn't tell you the devastation that results when you disregard this first commandment. Did you really expect Satan to tell you the truth? Jesus called him a liar and the father of lies. Satan doesn't tell you the damage that you will experience when you disregard and disobey the first commandment. Not only you, both those around you.

I was talking to a friend of mine this past week. He is a member of our church family. He told me some of his life story. As a young man, he made self his god. He was preoccupied with pleasure. Having fun! He wanted to do what he wanted to do. Whatever would bring him pleasure. If someone had accused him of breaking the 1st commandment, he probably would have denied it. But that is exactly what he was doing. He was his own god.

He wanted to drink what he wanted to drink. And he wanted to inhale what he wanted to inhale. Satan was seducing him at every turn. Satan didn't tell him about the devastating consequences, not only for his own life but also for his children. Satan didn't tell him smoking marijuana when his children were young would result in devastating methamphetamine and heroin addictions in his children. Satan didn't tell him that his inappropriate sexual conduct when his children were growing up would predispose his children to rampant sexual promiscuity and abuse. You see, Satan is a liar. So Satan doesn't tell you the devastating consequences of displacing God from His rightful place in your life. Satan simply says, "You be God. You be #1. Your pleasure. Your desires. Your wishes."

But the LORD God loves us. He cares about us, and about our families. That's why the LORD our God begins these 10 sayings with "You shall have no other gods before Me." He knows our tendency to put someone else or something else first in our lives. And He knows how that behavior will not only damage us personally, but also damage those that we love.

But I don't want us to remember this first saying just in the negative. I want us to think of this first word of blessing in the positive. If the negative is "You shall have no other gods before Me," what is the positive? "You shall have Me as your God." The LORD God is saying to you, "I want to be your God!"

The "you" that is used here in the 10 words of blessing is in the 2nd person singular. It's personal. It's direct. The LORD our God is saying, "John, don't let anyone or anything come before Me in your life. John, I want to be your God! Pamela, I want to be your God! Frank, I want to be your God." Put your name there. "Bodil, Mark, Jackie, Don....the LORD God is saying to you personally, "I want to be your God."

So what happens when you make a decision to completely and unreservedly ask the LORD to be your God? I have asked a woman of God to help us answer that question this morning. Sabine, you have such a vibrant connection with God! We've seen the devastating consequences of displacing God from His rightful place in our lives. I want to talk about what happens when we consciously invite the LORD God to be our God!

Interview with Sabine:

-How old were you when you first began to seek a personal intimate relationship with God?

-How does it affect you to know deep in your heart that the LORD God wants a personal relationship with you?

-How are you sensing the reality of God's presence in your life right now?

Thank you, Sabine. What an amazing testimony! Thank you for reminding us that the LORD our God, creator of the heavens and the earth, wants a personal relationship with us. He wants us to experience intimacy with Him. You are His precious child and He loves you. He wants a relationship with you. He longs for you to experience intimacy with Him as your God, like the psalmist David, who wrote: "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands." Psalm 63:1-5

Now when you think about this first commandment, it seems totally different! It's so much more than don't have any other gods before Me. The LORD our God is saying to us, "I want to be your God!" I want a relationship with you! Personally!

Will you let Him be your God today? Do you have the courage to say, "LORD, show me anything or anyone that is displacing You from Your rightful place in my life. I don't want to have other gods before You. I want you to be my God!"