

#2. Do Not Worship Idols

(Exodus 20:4-6)

Introduction

God has given us a lot of wonderful things in this world to enjoy. What are some of the things that you like doing best? (Sliding on the snow, going on a picnic, fishing, in-line skating, hiking in the woods, playing with friends, and so on.)

God is so good! He blesses us by allowing us to enjoy all these things.

Psalm 104:24

O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all...

But sometimes we can allow *things* to crowd into our hearts and push God out.

Last week we learned that God wants us to recognize that He is the *only* true God who created all things. He doesn't want us to let anything or anyone become more important to us than He is.

If a person was able to obey the first commandment, he wouldn't need the second commandment. If you love God with all of your hearts, you would never dream of allowing someone or something else to take the place of God.

But today we're going to learn that we need to be on guard. Sometimes *things* sneak into our lives and grab our time and attention and become like idols in our lives.

God not only wants us to know that He's *the* only God; He also wants us to worship *only* Him.

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for all the wonderful things in this world that You have given us to enjoy. Sometimes we let these *things* take first place

in our hearts. Help us to understand what it means to put You first in our hearts. Show us the things in our lives that sneak in and grab our time and attention. Show us what we need to take out of our lives so that we can put more of You in. Help us so that we have no others gods before You. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind... (Exodus 20:4a)

Lesson

We have been learning the Ten Commandments. Can anyone say the first one without looking?

1. *Do not have any gods but Me* – God wants us to recognize that He is the *only* true God who created all things. He doesn't want us to let anything or anyone become more important to us than He is.

The first four commandments teach us to love God with all of our hearts. And the other six commandments teach us to love others with that same kind of perfect love. By learning how to honor and love God first, you learn to honor and love others.

Today we're going to learn the second commandment.

Exodus 20:4-5a

"You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. (5) You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God..."

Who knows what an idol is?

In some places in the world people carve images in wood or stone or metal then bow down to it and worship it. It may look like something God has made — an animal, bird, fish or human form. It may be a huge statue or even a tiny good luck charm.

How many of you have heard of a "lucky charm"? Some people believe that if they carry a rabbit's foot around with them, it will keep them safe from harm. Other's think it is good luck to find a four-leaved

clover. We know that there is no such thing as “luck” in this world because we know God. Everything that happens in this world is according to His plan and purposes.

People who make idols believe that the idol itself is a god. They trust the idol rather than look to God. But an idol is only a created thing that takes the place of God. God cannot be reduced to an idol.

Psalm 115:3-8

Our God is in the heavens, and he does as he wishes. (4) Their idols are merely things of silver and gold, shaped by human hands. (5) They have mouths but cannot speak, and eyes but cannot see. (6) They have ears but cannot hear, and noses but cannot smell. (7) They have hands but cannot feel, and feet but cannot walk, and throats but cannot make a sound. (8) And those who make idols are just like them, as are all who trust in them.

We all can see how silly it is for people to carve an image out of wood and then bow down to it and pray to it. It’s just a piece of wood. But sometimes we can’t see how we make for ourselves idols out of the things that are important to us in our lives.

No Room for God

This wet-but-wonderful activity illustrates how a heart crowded with worldly things removes God from first place in our lives.

Materials: Plastic bucket or pitcher (be sure the container holds as many cups of water as there are children in the class), water, tray, and for each child: a cup, a rock, and a permanent marker.

Preparation: Tape a large red heart on the water pitcher, and place the pitcher on the tray. Pour a cup of water for each child, set aside for now.

Activity:

- Hand each child a rock and a permanent marker. Ask the children to think about what takes up a lot of their time, attention, and money (TV, video or computer games, soccer practice, or playing with friends.) Have the children write or draw those things on their rocks.
- Hand each child a cup of water.

This pitcher is like an empty heart. Our cups of water represent God. Let’s fill this heart with God. When it’s your turn, pour water into the pitcher and say, “*God deserves first place in my heart.*”

We want our hearts to be filled with the goodness of God, but sometimes other things try to crowd into our hearts. Each of you may tell us what’s drawn or written on your rock. Then you can place your rock into the water. [As the children add their rocks, the water will overflow. When they are finished, ask...]

- What happened to the water? Why?
- How is this like what happens in our own hearts with God?
- How can we keep our hearts full of God so he has first place?

God’s second commandment tells us not to worship idols. But, sometimes the things we love become like idols, crowding God out. God wants and deserves first place in your life.

Let’s look at the second commandment again:

Exodus 20:4-5a

*You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. (5) You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a **jealous** God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods.*

What do you think it means that God says He's a *jealous* God? God hates anything that causes us to be unfaithful to Him. He will not tolerate any competition for our love. For example, I am a jealous wife. I love my husband and I will not stand for any other woman drawing his attention away from me. God feels the same way about you. He loves you and will not put up with anyone or anything that tries to steal your love away from Him.

God wants and deserves first place in your heart. He wants you to put Him first in your time, your thoughts, your prayers, your money, your energy, and your love. When other things steal God's place, they become idols in our lives. God won't settle for being number two in our lives. He wants and deserves first place in your life.

What things can steal God's place in your life? We get so busy, don't we? Sometimes a whole day can slip by, without us giving God any of our time or love. We need to watch out for those people or things that want to grab first place from God.

Know Your God

I'm going to randomly tell you a quality of a god. You tell me if it describes our only true God, or a false god, an idol.

[Teacher, make cards out of the following lists and place them up on the board under the headings the children tell you.]

True God	False God
can fill your heart with true joy	cannot make you happy
forgives sin	can change
is able to heal	will crumble into dust
is perfectly holy	can be carried around
knows your every thought	are expensive

True God	False God
loves you	can't love you
hears everyone in the world at the same time	can't hear you

Isn't our God worthy of all our praise and worship?

It is important for us to think rightly about our God. Let's read this passage to see what happens when people don't really know who God is.

Romans 1:21-23

Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. (22) Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. (23) And instead of worshipping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

If you think rightly about God; if you really know who He is, then you will make God #1 in your life and you won't let anything or anyone else crowd Him out.

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for being a God that deserves first place in our lives and hearts. Lord, sometimes it's hard to know what is taking Your place. We're sorry for the times we've let things fill up our hearts and crowd You out. Please, remind us when that is happening. We want you to be #1 in our lives. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. What does the first commandment mean? (*Do not have any gods but Me* – God wants us to recognize that He is the *only* true God who created all things. He doesn't want us to let anything or anyone become more important to us than He is.)
2. What does the second commandment mean? (*Do not worship idols* – God wants us to worship only Him. Don't let anyone or anything steal God's place in your life.)
3. What do the first four commandments teach us? (How to love God.)
4. What do the last six commandments teach us? (How to love other people with godly love.)
5. What is an idol? (A man-made thing, a carved image, that some people worship.)
6. What are some things that take up your time and attention that crowd out the things of God? (TV, video or computer games, etc.)
7. How do you fill your heart with the goodness of God? (Reading the Bible, praying, thinking about how good He is.)
8. The Bible says that God is jealous. What does that mean? (God hates anything that causes us to be unfaithful to Him. He will not tolerate any competition for our love.)

9. Tell me something that you know about our wonderful God? (He's forgiving, He's perfectly holy, He's all-knowing, etc.)
10. Why is it important for us to know what God is like? (If you think rightly about God you'll make Him #1 and you won't let anything crowd Him out of your life.)

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