

REJECT IDOLS

Small Group Study Guide | May 19, 2024

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discuss: What are some images or idols that people bow down to in our culture today?

Key Text: “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 9 You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 10 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.” (Deuteronomy 5:8-10)

In last week’s lesson on Commandment #1, we learned that we are to give God first place in our lives. In today’s lesson on Commandment #2, we’ll see that God commands us to reject idols—we must never make, bow down to, serve, or have anything to do with any earthly image or thing in place of God. Bringing the Creator-God down to the level of creation is treating something as a god that is not God—and that is idolatry.

1. Revelation – What is God teaching us about Himself in Commandment #2?

In Commandment #2, God is teaching us that:

- While God is a living, personal Being who we can know personally (John 17:3), He is spirit—that is, He does not have a physical body (Jn.4:24). Because God is spirit, He is invisible (Col.1:15; 1 Tim.1:17), omnipresent (Ps.139:7-12), and infinite (He exists outside of and is not limited by time or space). Thus, no physical or visible image we can create could ever accurately portray Him. Nothing above the earth, on the earth, or under the earth could ever be like God. Using an image or idol in worship grossly misrepresents God by attempting to make Him into something visible and physical, which He is not. The nature of God should determine how we worship Him!

Discuss: In John 4:24, Jesus says we are to worship “*in spirit and truth.*” Why must our worship be both passionate (in spirit) and biblically informed (in truth)?

- In the incarnation, Jesus Christ took on human flesh and became the visible, physical presence of God so the work of salvation could be completed (Jn.1:14). Jesus did not violate Commandment #2 since He was not merely a representation of God; Jesus *was* (and *is*) fully God! Jesus is co-equal in every way to the Father and Holy Spirit. As such, Jesus rightfully demanded obedience to His teachings and worship of Himself *as* God not *instead of* God (as an idol does).

Discuss: How does John 1:1-2, 14 inform us of Jesus’ nature as God in the flesh?

- God considers idolatry to be hatred for Him (Deut.5:9). He is “*jealous*” (v.9)—He will tolerate no rivals. The phrase “*visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children...*” (v.9) means that parents who worship idols tend to have children and grandchildren who become idolaters, and God allows their choice. But if an idolater turns to God, He will show mercy to him and to his descendants (v.10).

Discuss: When have you seen a person’s faith in God (or their nonbelief in God) affect their descendants’ faith (or nonbelief) in God?

2. Introspection – What is God teaching us about ourselves in Commandment #2?

In Commandment #2, God is teaching us that:

- We easily deceive ourselves into thinking we are doing something for God when we are actually doing it for ourselves. Note that Commandment #2 says, “*You shall not make for yourself a carved image...*” (Deut.5:8). When we replace God with something, we’re not doing it for God’s glory—we’re doing it for ourselves.

Discuss: Why is idol worship such a powerful temptation?

- We are susceptible to pride. Carving an image (Deut.5:8) implies effort, determination, and concentration by the carver. An idol maker is giving his or her best to the demonic spirit represented by the image they carved instead of to God.

Discuss: What does 1 Corinthians 10:31 teach about our intentions and efforts?

- God created humans in His image and after His likeness: “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*” (Gen.1:26), yet idolaters arrogantly try to turn it around and make Creator God into creation’s image, after creation’s likeness! Note that the same two words “*image*” and “*likeness*” used in Genesis 1:26 are also used in Commandment #2: “*You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness...*” God created us in His “*image*”—He made us to represent Him in the world. And God created us after His “*likeness*”—we resemble (albeit with limitations and imperfections) God’s intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual capacities. Possessing God’s image and likeness sets humans apart from and above all the rest of God’s creation. But idolaters try to reduce God to an image to represent *us*, after *our* likeness to resemble *our* capacities even though we are fallen and limited! No wonder God detests idols (and so should we)!

Discuss: How do these verses emphasize the differences between humans and God: Numbers 23:19; Psalm 50:16-21; Isaiah 55:9; James 4:12?

3. Transformation – How does God want us to live per Commandment #2?

God wants us to:

- Worship Him alone in accordance with John 4:24: “*in spirit* [in genuine, heartfelt passion] *and in truth* [biblically informed].”

Discuss: How do you worship of God in spirit and in truth when you are by yourself? When you worship God corporately (such as at church)?

- Start (or continue) a legacy of Christian faith that can be passed down to your descendants and future generations of your family.

Discuss: What example of “generational faith” do you see in 2 Timothy 1:5?

For Further Study:

Free online study tools (commentaries, dictionaries, etc.) at blueletterbible.org

Ten Secrets of Successful Living: A Perfect 10 for Families That Win by Adrian Rogers

“What is the Definition of Idolatry?” article at gotquestions.org