

Discussion Questions: Living in Freedom 1st Commandment: No other gods – Exodus 20:1-3

Drawn from the January 5, 2025 sermon by Dr. Jeff Chandler

Opener: What is an activity you focus the bulk of your emotional effort on each week?
How does God factor into this?

The Ten Commandments are known all over the world as the basis for legal order and civilized society. Some people think, "All I have to do is obey the Ten Commandments and I'll be right with God." But reading Exodus, we see something else about salvation and deliverance. The people were delivered by the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, and that is the only way we can be delivered—not by obeying the Law. The Law was given to a delivered people and was **not** the means of escape from Egypt. The only way to escape the judgment of God is by faith in the blood of the Lamb - our Lord and Savior Jesus. (See Galatians 3:11; Romans 3:20.)

Then why the Law? Why the Ten Commandments? In the original context, the Law was given for life in the Promised Land, which they were about to enter; this was how the delivered people were expected to live. The people of Israel needed the discipline and training in holiness—because like our world today, they were adrift morally. This new nation needed guidelines and laws to live by as it escaped the pull and captivity of 400+ years in Egypt (years without instruction) and prepared to enter the Promised Land. The Israelites also needed a God-given culture to distinguish them from the Canaanites, who had no interest in following God. God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and formed a special relationship with his people – a relationship much like a marriage. Just as a good marriage is dependent on mutual commitment and trust, so our relationship with God must be based on exclusive commitment. God gave us a set of expectations, the first of which is "I am your God".

Jesus affirmed this truth in Mark 12:29-30 saying, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.'

The Ten Commandments do not prescribe penalties, so they are more like vows which describe the unique relationship God has with his people. These vows are timeless principles, and all are mentioned again throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Read the first commandment found in Exodus 20:2-3

"I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. You must not have any other god but me."

1. Try to define in a sentence or two what it personally means to love God with all your heart.

We must worship and serve God exclusively: *"Jesus said to the devil, "Go away from me, Satan! It is written in the Scriptures, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.' "* (Matthew 4:10, NCV).

2. What is the point of requiring this exclusive worship on God's part? What benefits are there to God and to us?

3. Money is one of the tests of our priorities. Deuteronomy 14:23 says *"The purpose of tithing is to teach you to put God first in your lives."* (Living Bible) How has use of money played a role in your worship of God? Have you seen any sacrificial giving rewarded like the Bible promises?

4. We are to place God first in fun times, play times, amusements, hobbies etc. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says *"So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."* What do you talk about the most? How does God come up in your regular conversations?

The people we associate with can also influence our priorities. Proverbs 12:26 says “The godly give good advice to their friends; the wicked lead them astray.”

5. How do your current friends either build you up or tear you down in your relationship with God. Do you need to change anything?

How we see ourselves can affect how we see God. Ephesians 2:10 says “We are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

6. How does your relationship with God impact the kinds of “good things” you do? How do you see God’s hand at work in these activities?

7. An important result of this commitment is that God offers us his personal love and attention. He wants us to come to him for the big things and the small things. 1 Peter 5:7 says “Give ALL your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.” How have you recently sensed God’s love and care for you in your life?

Group Prayer Time: In this session you’ve talked about putting God first in your life in a number of areas: finances, interests, relationships, activities and troubles. In which of these would you like to give more control to God and put your trust in him? Spend some time praying together and appreciating what God has done for you. Pray also for any needs you are facing in the group.

For personal reflection in the group or on your own:

The Scriptures are very clear that the Law now resides within our hearts and minds.

“But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day,” says the Lord. “I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” (Jeremiah 31:33, and Hebrews 8:10)

The Ten Commandments moved from a position of external to internal. The law would be put into the minds and hearts of His people. With the new covenant also came the promise of the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who receive Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that guides us in following God's decrees and gives us the power to keep His laws.

How has reliance on the Holy Spirit helped you to love in the way God desires?

Since beginning to follow Jesus how have you sensed that move from external to internal in your own life and motivations?

Next week, January 12, pastor Jeff will cover “Do not make an Idol” and there will be discussion questions available in “Downloads” on the SCC website.