

Subject: *The First Commandment*

Scripture: *Exodus 20:1-17*

By way of introduction, we should notice some general characteristics about all Ten Commandments as a group.

- A. The *authority* of God's Commandments – They are God-given commands. Just as God has natural laws to govern the physical world (gravity) and just as God ordains civil laws to govern human life (laws that protect life and property), He also has moral laws to govern the spiritual world (like the Ten Commandments). He is the author of law and order. You must have law to have order.
- B. The *clarity* of God's Commandments – They are clear and easy to understand. These are legal commands, but they are not complicated commands with a lot of conditions or exceptions. They are very simple and straightforward.
- C. The *gravity* of God's Commandments – They are God's laws and they have very serious consequences. Notice that God is the speaker ("I") and they are given to His people ("Thou"). This is the singular form in all the commandments to stress the individual responsibility to know them and obey them.

The Ten Commandments have two divisions. The first four commands are about our relationship to God. The last six commands are about our relationship with other people. The first and second commands are about the nature of God, the third command is about God's name, and the fourth is about God's day, the Sabbath.

1. The first commandment is about the one true God

It is a commandment about God Himself (vs. 3). This is the truth that God is the only true God. This is God's exclusive claim to be the only God.

A. Who is the one true God?

God first identifies Himself in verse 2. "LORD" is Yahweh ("I AM"). He is the eternal God, the self-existent, self-sufficient, unchanging God. He is the living God, the God who created all things, the God of Adam and Eve, of Noah, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the God who brought His people out of Egypt.

B. How do we know He is the only true God?

We know it because the Bible says so.

Deuteronomy 4:39 Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

Isaiah 45:5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me.

Isaiah 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

C. What does it mean to have this God as our God?

This refers to a covenant relationship with Him. This is found in **Deuteronomy 5:1-7**. God has a relationship with Israel known as the Old Covenant. God also has a relationship with believers in Christ known as the New Covenant. We come into this New Covenant relationship when we repent of our sins and trust in Christ as Lord and Savior. We remember this special covenant in the Lord's Supper and we remember Christ's words "This cup is the new covenant in my blood."

To have this God as our God means we have reverent fear of Him. It means we trust Him, love Him, worship, and obey Him. That is what it means to have Him as our God.

2. The first commandment is about our exclusive loyalty to the one true God

What does it mean "no other gods before me"? Scholars have different views on what that means, but most likely it means "have no other gods in my presence." It means that you shall not have any gods besides or along with the true God. We must love and serve and worship God alone. God will not tolerate any rivals. He demands and deserves our total devotion.

A. Application of the first commandment in Moses' day

We need to understand this commandment in its original context. Israel was surrounded by people who believed in and worshiped many gods. They had lived in Egypt 400 years in the midst of all their false gods and false worship. The ten plagues were judgments not only on Pharaoh and the people, but they were judgments on the Egyptian gods. God was going to bring His people into the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. But Canaan was full of false gods and false religion. They must be aware of the danger of idolatry and realize that God will not allow His people to have any other gods besides Him. Much of the Old Testament is the record of Israel falling into idolatry like the other nations and God judging them for it.

B. Application of the first commandment in our day

How does this apply to our lives today? An idol is anything you love, serve, or trust as much or more than God. We have the god of self, the god of entertainment and pleasure, the god of career, and of course the god of money. An idol is anything that takes the place of God in your life. An idol is anything that is more important than God.

1 Timothy 6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

1 John 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

You may assume that you have always obeyed the first commandment to have no other gods besides the one true God. You might say, I've never believed in other god or gods. I have always believed in the one true God. But is that all, just believing there is only one God? Did you know the devil believes that, too?

James 2:19 *Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*

The devil knows and believes there is only one true God, but he doesn't love God, obey God, trust in God, or worship God.

You may think you have always obeyed the first commandment to have no other gods besides the one true God, but the truth is you love God, serve God, obey God, and worship God when it's convenient and when it's not convenient you serve another god. That happened a lot in the OT, and we have the story of Elijah confronting the people in the days of King Ahab. The people thought they could worship God and also worship the false god Baal.

1 Kings 18:21 *And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*

When King Solomon dedicated the Temple of the Lord, he acknowledged his commitment and loyalty to the one true God and led the nation to do the same.

1 Kings 8:22-23 ²² *And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: ²³ And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart.*

Years later, King Solomon sadly compromised his loyalty to the one true God and supported the false gods of his many wives. It could be that has happened to you or someone you know.

We need to hear the words that Joshua spoke to Israel near the end of his life. He challenged the people to serve the one true God and Him only.

Joshua 24:15 *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*

All of us are either serving the Lord or some other god. Make the right choice like Joshua. Parents make the right choice for yourself and your children.