

**TEN COMMANDMENTS**  
**(Part Two)**  
**Respect For God's Uniqueness**

**Text:** Exodus 20.4 - 6 (in pew Bible p. 73 / in large print Bible p. 114)

**Intro:**

-Part Two in series on Ten Commandments.

- Part One = No Other Gods / *respect for God's authority.*
- Part Two = No Idols / *respect for God's uniqueness.*
  - Idol = God being upstaged by something / someone.
  - **illust.** Wine Company

-Laura Schlessinger: crisis of ethical vacuum in our world.

- ethics provide direction, meaning, purpose and value to life.
- help us to fulfill our mandate to represent God in this world (Genesis 1.26, 27).

-Ten Commandments provide a moral compass for:

- Jews = foundation of God's covenant w. O.T. Israel – *relationship & community.*
- Christians = all are reaffirmed in the N.T. & *therefore are binding on Christians.*
- Everyone = all people can understand & do the right thing.

-pattern for the Ten Commandments:

- 4 are God-ward = only one God, no idols, name not in vain, keep Sabbath holy.
- 6 are man-ward = honour parents, respect life, moral fidelity, honesty, truthfulness, no coveting.

**Take Home Point:**

- Lewis Smedes: instead of “live and let live” – “love and help others live.”

- transform prohibitions into positive **directions.**

-paradigm for studying the Ten **Directions:**

1. What does the command ask or forbid?
2. Why does the commandment ask or forbid?
3. How should I obey the commandment?

-so let us turn to the second commandment / **direction:** 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. 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. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands (Exodus 20.4 - 6).

## 1. MEANING OF RESPECT FOR GOD'S UNIQUENESS

-loyalty to God – *this is the greatest commandment.*

One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

Jesus replied, “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’ “ (Mark 12.28 – 30).

-God commands / **directs** us to worship no idols / images.

- To whom can you compare God?  
What image can you find to resemble him? (Isaiah 40.18).

-God doesn't reveal himself visibly – no one can see God and live (Exodus 33.20).

- but he does reveal his way.
  - demands that we make no idols in any form (v. 4).
  - 50 of the 613 laws in the Pentateuch are directed against idolatry.
  - Isaiah's parody against idolatry – Isaiah 44.9 – 20 (p. 720).
- God is jealous / zealous & doesn't bide competition (v. 5).
  - showdown btwn. Egypt's gods & Yahweh (Exodus chs. 7 to 11).
  - showdown btwn. Philistines' god Dagon & Yahweh (1 Samuel chs. 6 - 7).
  - showdown btwn. Baal's priests & Yahweh (1 Kings 18).

-process of idolatry = *making a means into an end*:

- Bronze Serpent (Numbers 21.6 – 9) became a stumbling block (2 Kings 18.4).
- symbol becomes confused with reality.
- likely why we don't have an “autograph” of Scripture.
  - Idol = God being upstaged by something / someone.

## 2. WHY WE MUST RESPECT GOD'S UNIQUENESS

-God commands / **directs** us to worship no idols or images before him.

- idolatry distorts our relationship with God.
  - seek to manipulate God by human whim & magic.
  - God is no longer greater than creation and human senses.
- no idol or likeness is adequate / accurate.
  - God is jealous / zealous of his image.
  - 2nd command / **direction** reminds us that our relationship is covenantal and not just casual.

-consequences for idolatry = *exile*:

- Israel / 722 B.C. / *Assyria* (2 Kings 17).
- Judah / 586 B.C. / *Babylon* (2 Kings 25).

-post-exile Judaism never struggled with physical idols again.

- rigidly monotheistic / cf. *opposition to Jesus*.
  - **illust.** Oliver Cromwell's Iconoclastic policy.
  - **illust.** Old Order Mennonites & photos / pictures.
  - **illust.** Taliban Smashes Statues Of Buddha In Afghanistan.

-penalty for idolatry *is severe*:

- punishment = up to 4 generations (v. 5).
  - A.N.E. idiom = continuity.
  - addictions & abuse cycle.

-reward for obedience *is exceedingly generous*:

- up to 1000 generations (v. 6).
  - A.N.E. idiom = limitless duration.
  - *Hesed* = covenant loyalty & innate response.

### 3. HOW WE SHOULD RESPECT GOD'S UNIQUENESS

-worship the true "image" of God.

- Jesus Christ is the true image of God.  
No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known (John 1.18).

He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being (Hebrews 1.3).

-avoid idols and false images of God.

- reject anything that takes the place of God.

Dear children, keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5.21).

- fantasy / unreality, spiritual substitutes, *immoral practices* (Diana).

The believers in Macedonia and Achaia ... tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1.9).

What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people" (2 Corinthians 6.16).

-respecting God's uniqueness results in respecting others as part of God's image (Genesis 1.26, 27).

- my well-being is to look out for the wellbeing of others.
- this is the basis of authentic religion.

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you (James 1.27).

-love of idols, such as materialism prevents us from loving and helping other to live well.

### **Conclusion:**

1. Know what God wants.

- the command asks / forbids – *follow only the of One True God.*

- love God and keep his commandments (v. 6).
- follow his commands / directions for a full orbed relationship.
  - loyalty / nothing upstaging God in our lives.

-the reason for this command – *idolatry distorts relationship & dishonours God.*

- Part Two = No Idols / respect for God's uniqueness.
  - disobedience carries dire consequences / obedience brings lavish reward.

2. Know how to do what God wants.

-worship the true "image" of God = Jesus / be the true "image" of God.

-instead of "live and let live" – *"love and help others live."*

- don't be a stumbling block - But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak (1 Corinthians 8.9).

-lay aside every weight that so easily besets us.

- let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12.1, 2).

-reject the idols of:

- Atheism
- Astrology
- Celebrities

- illust. Paul Brandt

3. Know that you will do it.

-**Closing Hymn:** #349 Trust And Obey (v. v. 1, 4, 5).

## Wine Company

A wine company advertisement in Newsweek magazine read, "The earth gives us wonderful grapes. The grapes give us wonderful wine. The wine gives us lots of new friends. Thank you, earth."

How easy to give credit and thanks to everything or everyone but the real source of our blessing!

When people do that with God, it is a form of idolatry, which goes against the Ten Commandments. Today we continue the sermon series on the Ten Commandments (*750 Engaging Illustrations* Craig Brian Larson, p. 211).

## Atheism

The man who views God in disbelief is tempted to set 'Man' up as the object of his belief, to view 'Man' as the all-knowing creature who is subject to no laws or rules other than those which he himself sees fit to implement. To worship "Man" in general, or to worship some special man in particular, is the height of idolatry. If man, with his endowed intelligence and spiritual capacities, is the most sophisticated of all God's creatures, he is also the object of the most sophisticated form of idolatry (*The Ten Commandments* Laura Schlessinger, p.p. 27, 28).

## Astrology

Astrology is just another way for some people to avoid taking responsibility for their lives. By consulting a horoscope, people can place the heavy burden of difficult decisions on the answers given by the stars and not by God's Spirit / Word.

There are numerous biblical passage (e.g. Deuteronomy 18.10 – 12; Isaiah 47.13, 14) which warn us against any kind of "magic" that can predict future events or advise on decisions (*The Ten Commandments* Laura Schlessinger, p.p. 37, 38).

## Celebrities

Fans can go to the extreme in their devotion to celebrities.

In the April 30, 1994, news section of *Christianity Today*, it was reported that some fans of Elvis Presley were actually revering the king of rock and roll as a god. Pockets of semi-organized Elvis worship had taken hold in New York, Colorado, and Indiana. Worshipers raised their hands, spelled and then chanted Presley's name, worked themselves into a fervour, and prayed to the dead star.

Followers believe that Elvis watches over them. If someone reports seeing Presley, the high priest at the Church of the Risen Elvis in Denver holds Elvis worship services. They enshrined a look-alike doll of Elvis in an altar surrounded by candles and flowers.

Or consider this banner seen at Lambeau Field in 1996, the season the Green Bay Packers won the Super Bowl in New Orleans and their quarter back Brett Favre was named the most valuable player:

Our Favre who art in Lambeau, hallowed be thy arm. The Bowl will come, it will be won, in New Orleans as it is in Lambeau. Give us this Sunday our weekly win. And give us many touchdown passes. But do not let others pass against us. Lead us not into frustration, but deliver us to Bourbon Tree. For thine is the MVP, the best of the NFL, and the glory of the cheerleaders, now and forever. Go get em! (*750 Engaging Illustrations* Craig Brian Larson, p.p. 261, 262).

## Paul Brandt

There was no sign of Paul Brandt, country music superstar, anywhere. There were no TV cameras, nor any cowboy hats. A few journalists with cameras and notepads sat inconspicuously throughout the auditorium, which was nearly full. Perhaps 1,500 people came to watch the graduands of Briercrest College and Seminary, a small Christian college in Carleton Place, Saskatchewan, receive their diplomas. You would never have known that Paul Brandt was one such graduand, poised to receive his second honorary doctorate in seven months – this one a Doctor of Divinity.

As the ceremony unfolded, these words were spoken over Paul Brandt: "Briercrest College and Seminary is pleased to present Paul Brandt as a worthy candidate to receive the degree of Doctor of Divinity ... in recognition of his commitment to faithful service in building the Kingdom of God," said President Dwayne Uglem. Three professors placed a doctoral hood around Brandt's neck as he knelt, smiling.

Building the Kingdom of God isn't exactly part of the typical country star's job description. But for Brandt, that is exactly what the last decade has been about.

In 1995 Brandt had been singing and playing the guitar for ten years. He was a registered nurse at the Alberta Children's Hospital, and he'd recently won a singing competition at the Calgary Stampede. One day he came home to find a life-changing message on the answering machine. A representative from Reprise Records in Nashville, Tennessee, wanted to meet with him. Within weeks he had signed a record deal, and began recording.

He had a career launch that most people in the music industry would dream of. He and his wife Elizabeth moved to Nashville. By 2000 he'd recorded three albums. Life was good. But Brandt couldn't shake the feeling that something was wrong. The executives at his label had begun to ask questions: What was more important, his marriage or his career? His beliefs or his music?

He had a dream about all the people he'd performed for. They were heading down a road as the gates of Hell were "smouldering in the distance." There was nothing wrong with the three albums he'd produced. They were perfectly nice, perfectly moral – but they weren't pointing anyone to the good news of the gospel.

He and Elizabeth began to realize something needed to change. "God was calling me to lay all my hopes and dreams on that altar," Brandt said, comparing his experience to the biblical story of Abraham.

So he did. He walked into the label executive's office one day for a one-minute meeting, during which he asked to be released from his recording contract. After the papers were signed, Brandt who didn't have a back-up plan, felt free – and terrified. All he could do was pray.

In the past decade, Brandt's career as God's ambassador has flourished. In 2006 a lady down front stopped the concert right in the middle of the show. There were 2,000 people in the audience and she yelled, "My son is sick, I have to take him to the hospital and you still haven't played "Convoy." Brandt said, "We'd love to do that song for you ... Before we play, would you mind if we just prayed for your little boy?"

Paul and Elizabeth continue to do humanitarian work with the Alberta Children's Hospital and with international aid organizations such as World Vision, Samaritan's Purse, Place of Rescue (Cambodia), and the Ratanak Foundation. He is also in the process of forming his own aid foundation, Priceles\$, which will care for orphans and widows around the world – specially those enslaved by human trafficking (*Faith Today*, Amy Robertson, July / August 2010 p.p. 16 - 19).

