

Sun., Jan. 26

2020 Winter Message Series: Set Free to Live Free: The 10 Commandments

Love God, Love Others

Message: Set Free to Have No Idols

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-6

Text: “The ungodly traded God’s truth for a lie, and they worshiped and served the creation instead of the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” -Romans 1:25

Memory Verse: “There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the human Christ Jesus.” -1 Timothy 2:5

Blurb: At first glance, the second of the Ten Commandments seems easy for us: Don’t make any idols. But when we’re honest, we soon realize that we make all kinds of idols. The antidote is authentic worship. So, come this Sunday expecting to turn your face to God in true worship!

Opening Song: *Hymn Sing* -Andrew

Welcome: -David

Memory Verse: -David

“There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the human Christ Jesus.”
-1 Timothy 2:5

Greeting Time

Worship Music Set: -Sanctify

Only King Forever

A Mighty Fortress

Build My Life

Worship Prayer -Andrew

Serve Moment: Youth Mission Trip Fundraiser -Cassi Betker
UMCOR Kits

Offering: *Give Us Clean Hands* -Sanctify

Lemuel the Lion -Andrew & Vicky

Prayers: -Andrew

Bumper

Message: 10 Commandments: Set Free to Have No Idols

PP#1: 10 Commandments: Set Free to Have No Idols

“The ungodly traded God’s truth for a lie, and they worshiped and served the creation instead of the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” -Romans 1:25

The 10 Commandments: Set Free to Have No Idols. Romans 1:25, “The ungodly traded God’s truth for a lie, and they worshiped and served the creation instead of the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

PP#2: The 10 Commandments

1. God’s way is my best life.

“Then God spoke all these words . . .” -Exodus 20:1

We’re taking a good dose of humility and coming to God to ask for guidance. We’ve gotten by doing things our way, but we know we’re made for more than that. We realize we need to build our lives on a different foundation, solid foundation *stones* that hold up. And so in humility, we admit that my way isn’t the best way.

Humility means turning to God, opening ourselves to what God says. We stop talking, and we listen to what God says. Exodus 20:1, “Then God spoke all these words.” And God shows us two solid foundation stone tablets that make it possible for us to withstand everything we could ever face in life AND allow us to build a life in which we will not only survive, but also thrive. Write this down on the top of your note sheet: “God’s way is my best life.” It’s a statement of faith. It’s a conviction of our will. It is an admission of humility.

PP#3: The 10 Commandments

1. God’s way is my best life.

“Then God spoke all these words, . . .” -Exodus 20:1

2. Set Free to Live Free

“ . . . 2 I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” -Exodus 20:2

God doesn’t start off by spouting rules and regulations. God begins by showing up, long before we’re looking for Him, while we are still stuck and trapped, and God works to free us. We see this in Jesus, who came as our Savior and Lord, who died on the cross to take away our sin, to earn us forgiveness and reconciliation back to God, and who was raised on Easter to destroy the power of death for us, long ago. And now, Jesus comes to us in the Holy Spirit offering abundant and eternal life. All this God did for us, as a gift, because of His great love for us!

We see that same salvation millennia earlier. God came to the people, trapped in slavery in Egypt. God worked a mighty miracle defeating the binding powers. He led them into freedom from slavery and guided them into the Promised Land of abundant life. All this God did even though people could never do anything to deserve it or repay it. It was because of His great love.

And so, when God speaks, He first points to the expression of His great love: “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” See? I loved you first! You can trust me! I have set you free because I plan for you to live free!

PP#4: The 10 Commandments

1. God's way is my best life.
2. Set Free to Live Free
3. Love God and Love Others

Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.” Matthew 22:37-40

“To do that, my plan for you has two main parts.” Jesus was asked what the most important commandment was. He replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.” (Matthew 22:37-40) Two big ideas: love God, love others.

PP#5: *Image of the two stone tablets of the 10 Commandments. On the 1st stone it says “Love God.” On the 2nd stone it says, “Love others.” [Reese: Look at PP#6 before creating this one.]*

We see these in The 10 Commandments! Two stone tablets, two main ideas. And the two main ideas are to receive this love that God has first shown to us, showered on us, poured into us, to receive that and: 1. respond back to God in love, and 2. share it to others.

PP#6: *Previous image of the 2 stone tablets above, with the writing, but now with the added lines underneath them making them into a heart.*

The 10 Commandments are a gift of love from a loving God whom we can trust and who wants the best for us. So, we're unpacking—receiving in humility—this life-giving path from God. For this winter series we're looking at the first four commandments, the Love God commandments. Then, after Easter, we'll come back to the other six commandments, the Love Other commandments.

PP#7: *Image from last week with the #1 drawn into an arrow pointing up, with the verse, “‘You must have no other gods before [or besides] me.’” -Exodus 20:3*

So, The 10 Commandments: Set Free to Love God.

The very first commandment, the one on which everything else rides, is “You shall have no other gods before [or besides] me.” God must be number one in your life. He is at the center of your heart. It's a decision, a conviction, a vow. *Put Him there. Make Him your #1.*

PP#8: Exodus 20:3-6

“3 You must have no other gods before [or besides] me.

“4 Do not make an idol for yourself—no form whatsoever—of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. 5 Do not bow down to them or worship them, because I, the Lord your God, am a passionate [jealous] God. I punish children for their parents' sins even to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me. 6 But I am loyal and gracious to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

We keep reading today in Exodus 20, verse 4. Second commandment: “Do not make an idol for yourself—no form whatsoever—of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. Do not bow down to them or worship them, because I, the Lord your God, am a passionate [jealous] God. I punish children for their parents’ sins even to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me. But I am loyal and gracious to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

Now, just a side note, I need to explain about the numbering of these commandments. You may find some people who number the 10 Commandments a bit differently. You see, in the Hebrew, the commandments aren’t numbered, and the original text is not broken down into formatting, or even sentences. So part of the skill of reading Hebrew is to learn to make sentences as you read. Most people, both Jews and Christians, have numbered the 10 Commandments like we are doing here today. But there are some folks who see what we name as the first two commandments as actually the same commandment, and combine them as one. I can kind of see that, as they carry the same point: putting God first means having no idols. Those who do that then divide the last one, about coveting, which gets rather long, into two commandments about not coveting other people—like spouses, and not coveting other stuff—possessions.

But I think these first two are indeed separate commands. It’s one thing to have only one God. It’s another thing to not make images of your god. There is a human tendency to understand things in physical terms. And one of the ways we miss God’s best plan is to reduce God into physical terms. We put God first, but then we make Him concrete and manageable. Let’s unpack this.

PP#9: Set Free to Have No Idols

1. It’s about worshiping rightly

This second command is really about worship. The first command is about having the *right* God. The second command is about worshiping the right God *rightly*, keeping Him in His place.

We all worship. We were made to worship. Even those who claim not to worship any god worship the idol of themselves. It’s a matter of WHAT we worship: who and what and when and how. It’s what we live for, the someone or something that we pour ourselves out for. Peter Kreis said, “The opposite of Christianity is not atheism, but idolatry.”

PP#10: *Image of crazy football fans at a game...dressed funny, painted, doing motions.*

Let’s imagine that we imported a Hebrew person from 3,500 years ago into our culture today. What would he say we modern Americans worship? Hopefully here in church he would claim that we worship Jesus as the One True God. But then, in this next week ahead, what might he see Americans worship? Let’s see, what’s coming up this week? It’s the Super Bowl, right? He would see people dress up like animals and see their faces painted. They all dress the same, with their arms in synch, doing strange motions and chanting strange chants. They would be trying to affect the outcome of the game with their mantras and behaviors. It’s only weird if it doesn’t work, right?

PP#11: *Image of a tailgate party grilling looking a bit like an altar sacrifice.*

He would see animals slaughtered and barbequed as a sacrifice at the religious rite called tailgate party. I think our Hebrew friend would tell us that the Super Bowl is certainly a religious gathering. Think, too, about other sports gathering, college basketball games, the World Series, the World Cup.

PP#12: *Image of a mall (Mall of America?) with a superimposed image making it into a temple.*

How about the Mall of America? That is a temple, isn't it, where we worship *stuff*, worship possessions, wealth, accumulating things to improve our lives.

Or perhaps he'd see how we make certain people our saviors. At work, it's a certain boss or leader or CEO. In government we vote for a certain person who will save our city, state, or country.

PP#13: *Image from the show American Idol with it's name included.*

In entertainment we have individuals we follow, we disciple, we give our attention and focus. We dress like them, follow them, adopt what they think. Celebrities with their massive twitter following! We even come out and name it in our shows, "American Idol!"

PP#14: *Image of the brand Apple large in the middle with others around it: Nike, Microsoft, etc.*

Branding idols, I mean, *icons*. We are followers of Nike, are identified with North Face, are attached to our objects of Apple (that has just so many levels...the apple even has a bite out of it!). We align our lives with Microsoft, Medtronic, 3M.

We can't just have the right God. Life comes when we worship the right God rightly. If we don't, it's some form of slavery.

Making idols is always some form of turning the focus of worship off of God and onto ourselves. It's using what we can control (touch, see, do) in order to control our lives.

PP#15: Idolatry is

Paying for benefits

Being in control

Making it about you

Think about ancient idol worship. When they made that sculpture, they brought the mysterious and distant gods into their presence. Then they brought offerings to sway the gods to do what they wanted. Idolatry is paying for benefits. You are able to manipulate your god to get what you desire. In the end, idol worship is actually about yourself.

And—careful now—can you see how we have idols today, even if we don't have sculptures? We can have the right God, the Lord Most High, and still in so many ways shift the relationship with our God to getting what we want, to being all about us? Idolatry is trying to create some form of mediator to connect us to God. It's us trying to bring God down to us.

PP#16: True Worship: Jesus is our only mediator to God

True worship is the opposite. It's God lifting us up into His presence. God has given the Mediator: He became a human, in the person of Jesus, to be our one and only mediator between us and God. Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the human Christ Jesus."

Only Jesus brings us into God's presence. Only Jesus can restore us to right relationship with God. Only Jesus is our focus of worship. Only His death and resurrection can bring us life.

Idolatry is replacing Jesus as our mediator. Yes, the 10 Commandments were written 1,500

years before Jesus, but already then, in the second commandment, God was laying the foundation stone for salvation only through Jesus.

PP#17: Idols . . .
 . . . Lie

Idols lie. They make promises they can't deliver. You leave offerings to buy certain outcomes, but idols can't deliver. Alcohol may bring avoidance, or numbing of pain, or even fun, but it's only for a time. Money may buy fun today, but it can't buy happiness. Sex may feel good, but it can't bring meaningful relationships. Position may make you in charge, but it won't earn respect. What they do bring is another form of slavery, an all-consuming commitment to live its way. Only God can deliver freedom, the freedom to choose the best path. Idols require sacrifices *from us*. The true God gives Himself as a sacrifice *for us*.

Idols also lie because it is WE who are made in the image of God. We don't worship created images of God; we ARE images that are created to worship God. We are His image, like mirrors, Paul says. Worship is reflecting God's glory, God's character. That's why true worship is life giving. It transforms us into God's image, restores our broken image, makes us whole again.

We choose Jesus, and we choose to follow Jesus. Jesus is the perfect image of God. God is seen most clearly in Jesus. Colossians 1:15, "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the one who is first over all creation." We follow Jesus because when we worship God's perfect Image, who is Jesus, this Jesus restores God's image in us. Then we are restored to abundant life.

PP#18: Idols . . .
 . . . Lie
 . . . Divert

Christians can struggle to keep Jesus as our Mediator. We desire to bring gifts to thank God for His love, in response to our salvation, and our desire that we would give all of who we are and all that we have so that others can come to know Jesus, too. We want to bless God, and give Him our best. So we use our God-given creative abilities to create beautiful houses of worship, decorated with all kinds of statues and beautiful art, filled with eloquent liturgy, powerful and moving music. And these can be beautiful expressions of our love and help us focus on Jesus better. But they can also slip into being our idols, when we think that we must be in church in order to get close to God, or have a moving experience to help us feel God close. Or creation can be an idol, thinking that the great outdoors brings us into God's presence. Or service, or being a good, helpful person, brings us to God. But only Jesus can bring us close to God. All these may help our worship, but they are themselves not true worship. Praising God and lifting Him up as Holy is the only true worship, no matter how you do it.

It's surprising how naturism is again becoming a popular idol. Besides the recent surge in naturistic religions like Wicca and Native Spirituality, general care about the environment can turn into our god. Outright worshiping nature, Mother Earth rather than Father God, is growing as a religion. It's surprising how easily we worship creation rather than the Creator.

Even the Bible can become an idol, when we worry about how we treat it as a book, or how slavishly we follow the rules in it. We can use the Bible to feel justified about how good we are and how others need to shape up and live different. If it's no longer about God, it's an idol.

What are the idols you struggle with? Tempting idols are offered by our culture and appeal to our selfish natures, like money, security, possessions, glory, power, prestige, sex, safety, control, being right, winning, comfort, pleasure, experiences. Idols are what keep you up at night, and what get you up in the morning.

PP#19: Idols . . .

. . . Lie
. . . Divert
. . . Indulge

Idols keep self at the center. Martin Luther said, “sin is the self bending in on the self.” Idols give you what you want. They are indulgent. They sell the lie of letting you be in control. Idols are convenient: they fit into the life you want. They are popular: they are prevalent and put you in with the crowd. They seem legitimate: they touch your immediate feelings and hungers.

PP#20: Idols . . .

. . . Lie
. . . Divert
. . . Indulge
. . . Enslave

But idols create slavery. They bind you to brokenness, emptiness, debt, to hollow relationships, addictions, feeling like you don’t belong, to patterns that don’t bring life.

We’re going to discover that each of the 10 commandments has a flip side, the danger or trap they steer us away from. Having only one true God keeps us from the slavery of false gods. Forbidding idols keeps us away from the slavery to false worship.

We create idols readily. We always have. John Calvin said, “The human heart is an idol factory.” And usually idols live in our hearts before they escape into our lives. Even good things, like marriage, family, our GPA, being financially secure, our possession, being included, can become idols. When good things become god things, they become bad things.

PP#21: Exodus 20:3-6

5 Do not bow down to them or worship them, because I, the Lord your God, am a passionate [jealous] God. I punish children for their parents’ sins even to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me. 6 But I am loyal and gracious to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

How do we do we keep on the good path? God just doesn’t give the command. He also gives the path of life. Don’t engage in ritualized idol worship. Got it! Then, look at verse 5. God says, “I the Lord your God, am a jealous God.” Love is passionate. It’s “all in.” Love is exclusive. Idolatry is adultery. More on that after Easter. But we must understand that we are in relationship with our God. We must keep God personal, and remember He is a jealous lover.

PP#22: Set Free to Have No Idols

1. It’s about worshiping rightly
2. Our God is a jealous God
3. Our idolatry brings consequences on others

Next, God says idolatry brings consequences. To you, yes, but listen up: your sin affects all those around you. Talk to anyone who loves an addict. It's so destructive! Those we influence, we influence for good *and bad*. Our kids become more like us than we want to admit. Same with grandkids. You have an influence that reaches down generations! The punishments of our sins affect most those we love most. We pass it down, generation to generation. As one wizened older gentlemen once said to me, "Growing old shows you your sins amplified in your family."

PP#23: Set Free to Have No Idols

1. It's about worshiping rightly
2. Our God is a jealous God
3. Our idolatry brings consequences on others
4. Our right worship brings blessings to many generations

As tragic as this may be, there is also the good news. Rightly worshiping God not only breaks the power of contagious sin, of generational sin, its blessing also sustains much farther! God pours His life and blessing into the people we love most, too. God changes whole families when we worship right. Faithfulness in marriage brings life for the whole family. Our faith in God is contagious, and it is passed down to our descendants. I hold dearly a letter my mother's aged grandfather wrote to her back in the 1940s telling her of his love for Jesus and encouraging hers.

PP24: *Image of authentic worship.*

Look at the struggles in your life. You don't have a greed problem. You don't have an adultery problem. You don't have a coveting problem. You have a worship problem. Your best move is not to target these specific issues, but to grow and nurture your worship life. Fill up with good worship, train your focus on the true God. Put away your idols. Spend time in God's word. Join a grow group. If you prioritize worshiping well, your problems will work out.

Authentic worship takes humility. It's coming before God and admitting He is God and we are not. It's turning our faces away from what we want, from what we can control and instead turning our faces toward Him, making Him our focus, putting our identity in His. There is no mediator between us and Jesus. It's all Jesus, who Himself is our God. We put away everything we create to get what we want, and we choose to want only Jesus.

Let's do that. Let's turn our faces to Jesus and worship. Let's get Sanctify up here, and let's do a song of heartfelt worship. Stand with me, open your hearts fully to God, and make it all about Him. Let's worship!

Closing Song: *Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus* -Sanctify

Announcements:

Wednesday
Ministry Fair

Memory Verse: -David

"There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the human Christ Jesus."
-1 Timothy 2:5

Benediction