

Is God your only God? Frank Borg

Do we worship our Creator with a sense of awe and respect? Or do we sometimes put interests and pursuits of this world ahead of Him? How well do we obey the first commandment? God must be our only God!

The twentieth chapter of the book of Exodus outlines the Ten Commandments that God gave Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. These laws were given so that we can have the protection that we need to be guaranteed the enjoyment of true freedom, happiness and success. If applied, they give us peace with God and with man. Unfortunately, since God gave Israel these laws, most have severely deviated from them which has resulted in the chaos and unhappiness that we see in the world around us. Few understand that the strict adherence to these commandments, in spirit and in deed, are vital to ensure the worship of the one true God, and to securing the abundant blessings that come as a result of obedience to them.

Exodus 20:3-4 outlines the first of God's commandments which states: "I am the LORD thy God...thou shalt have no other gods before me." This is the first and great commandment (Matt. 22:38) in which God directly states that we need to make sure that He, the Creator and ruler of the universe, is the God that we worship. God wants us to keep Him first in our lives, *above all else!* We must not lose sight of the fact that God is behind these commandments. People often allow interests of this world to engulf their time, focus and energy thus allowing other gods to influence their being. In no uncertain terms, this first commandment prohibits us to falsely depend on anyone or anything other than God Himself. It clearly indicates that we must avoid *anything* that can endanger or hinder our worship of the one true God.

God and His Work must be at the forefront of our lives. If *anything* lends itself to directing our heart away from putting God first in our lives, we break this first commandment. We must be cautious not to allow anyone or anything to displace God from being our one and only God! A word of caution: one doesn't usually put God aside deliberately – it begins very subtly – this is the danger we must be extremely careful of. We must prevent the subtlety in which many *unintentionally* push God into second place. This begins the moment we start to compromise in any way with God and His laws.

On a regular basis, we must take a moment to evaluate what is most important in our lives. We need to assess our priorities and make sure that *nothing* in our life is emphasized more than those things that build and strengthen our relationship with God. Here are a few things we should consider: Do we put greater importance in enjoying our preferred pastimes or on studying the Bible? Do we spend more time, for example, watching television than we do praying and studying? Do we take more pride in our physical appearance rather than how we look to God in mind, spirit and truth? Are we enslaved to fitness, entertainment or any other distractions that may take priority in our lives? How effectively are we applying God's commandments and building our spiritual character?

Moderation is the key! Obviously, making sure we groom ourselves, engage ourselves in hobbies and wholesome entertainment are recommended and highly encouraged. However, what we need to be careful of is that we don't expend too much effort and time on these things to the point that they become objects of worship - we must allow these things to serve us and not the other way around! We must evaluate what we give time and attention to throughout the day and be careful not to serve our own lusts! How much time do we spend in study and prayer on a daily basis in contrast to how much time we spend doing some of

the other things in our life? We must ask ourselves these questions! God must come *first!*
This is essential!

There are a few other areas we should consider. Haggai 1:4, for example, tells us that in the end time some will lavish huge expense and attention on their own homes. While it certainly is not wrong to have a nice and comfortable home, God is here reminding people not to get caught up in materialism and neglect God and His Work. Material possessions, family, friends, studies and even our jobs are all extremely important, but they can come in between us and God if we allow them to. These things could divert our focus and attention away from Him and away from applying God's way of life if we are not careful. To make sure that nothing takes the place of God, we must keep our priorities in their proper order. We must not allow physical things to let us lose sight of the spiritual. Where our treasure is, is where our heart is (Matt. 6:21)! We are ultimately the servants of whom we obey. God must always come first!

Speaking to God in prayer first thing in the morning, before we begin with our daily work or activities, is something we must be in the habit of doing. We should also end our day in contact with Him. It is recorded that Daniel prayed *three times a day* (Dan 6:10)! Importantly, while we go about our day, we should live our life in an attitude of prayer (1Thess 5:17). By doing this, we show God that He *really* is in the forefront of our minds! Contact with God helps us draw closer to Him ensuring a strong relationship with our Creator. We must see God in *everything* that we do, whether it's in our work, activities, sport, family, the music that we listen to, the films that we watch and in every other pastime we engage in. We are admonished to seek Him in all that we do: "Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matt 6:33). This must be our daily goal! He must rank first in importance and every other demand must come second. If we keep this in mind *and apply it*, we uphold and obey the first commandment. God must be the greatest reality in our lives! Notice that the second part of verse 33 states: "...and all these things shall be added unto you"! If we put God first in our lives, and obey the first commandment, everything else will follow! God will see to it that our prayers, as long as they are according to God's will, are answered! What an inspiring and encouraging promise is made to us!

As we pray and as we go about our daily routine, we must be consistently grateful for all the blessings that God so abundantly pours over us. We need to think about how God intervenes in our lives on a daily basis – even in little things. God daily blesses us with abundance in so many areas - food, clothing, shelter and numerous other necessities and comforts - but there are also a number of other ways in which God intervenes and has a direct hand in our lives. For example, there is no doubt that very often God also keeps us out of danger and diverts us away from certain harmful situations which we don't even know about! Are we thankful for God's continual protection? Do we show appreciation for His mercy toward us? When we speak to God in prayer, we must be continually thankful to Him for all of our answered prayers and for all the good things that come our way each and every day. Do we consistently thank God for the revelation and spiritual food that He gives us? Are we grateful to God for the ministry and for the Work that we have the privilege to be a part of? The more detailed our prayers, and the more thankful we are to Him, the more central God is in our lives. This is all relevant to worshipping God and making sure that we are wholeheartedly applying the first commandment.

In responding to a question made to him by one of the Pharisees, Christ answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt 22:37). Christ was here telling the Pharisee that God must constantly be in the forefront of our minds – everything we say and do must be in compliance with His law, for Him to be our true God. To do this we must endeavor to think before we speak and think before we act. This will help ensure that our words and actions are in accordance to His will

and pleasing to Him. This is necessary if we are to keep focused, and make sure that we are doing our best to maintain God in the center of our lives and to avoid carnal interests from taking His place. *In everything we say or do, we either serve God or else we serve our own lust and Satan the devil.* Showing that we first and foremost love God with all our heart, soul and mind must be clearly evident by our words and actions.

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (Isaiah 45:22-23). God is here again asking us to worship and look to Him. If anyone of His people is guilty of breaking the first commandment, we are being admonished to come to repentance. One day in the near future, the whole world will have their chance and will come to realize that God is THE God! Right now is our chance to prove our loyalty to God!

With authority God tells us, ‘I am the Lord your God...you shall have no other god’s before me’ (Exodus 20:2-3). God wants to be our uncontested God! Not only is God entitled to this, but we have a duty to honor and worship Him as our Creator and Sustainer. Our desire and passion should be one of wanting to serve God and resist any urge that might keep us away from our Bible study and prayer.

Let us do all we can to show God that we depend on Him. God must come first and foremost in our lives and we can prove that to Him by ensuring that we worship Him with a sense of awe and respect. Let us always be in remembrance of the first commandment, obey it in spirit and in deed, and allow God to be our only God!