

**BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE**  
**Sunday, September 6, 2020**

**NEW THEME:**  
**AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART:**  
**A FRESH LOOK AT THE TEN**  
**COMMANDMENTS**

**SESSION 1 – PLACE GOD FIRST**



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This week begins a new series of lessons in the Bible Studies for Life Series – After God's Own Heart: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments. For those of us who have been around for "awhile," the Ten Commandments were part of our early Christian learning, and I daresay we could each repeat them from heart. But these six lessons will focus not so much on what we are NOT to do as Christians, but will reaffirm for us what obedience FREES and allows us to DO and to BE in Christ. Along the way, we will learn more about David, a man after God's own heart.

**OUR FOCUS FOR TODAY:** GOD is to have **FIRST PLACE** in **EVERY** aspect of life.

**OUR FOCAL PASSAGES FOR TODAY:** Exodus 20: 1-6 Psalm 16: 1-4a, 9-11

**BACKGROUND:** We remember that God delivered the Israelites from Egypt and miraculously led them to Mount Sinai. He met with them, revealed Himself and instructed them on the stipulations of his covenant with them. At the head of the list was the command to give Him **FIRST PLACE** in their lives. Many years later, King David would write and declare his trust in God and stress why God deserves the utmost priority in our lives.

**Exodus 20:1-6 – from The Message**

**20** <sup>1-2</sup>God spoke all these words: I am GOD, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of a life of slavery. <sup>3</sup>No other gods, only me. <sup>4-6</sup>No carved gods of any size, shape, or form of anything whatever, whether of things that fly or walk or swim. Don't bow down to them and don't serve them because I am GOD, your God, and I'm a most jealous God, punishing the children for any sins their parents pass on to them to the third, and yes, even to the fourth generation of those who hate me. But I'm unswervingly loyal to the thousands who love me and keep my commandments.

Every law is given by someone's authority. Most of these authorities are human, so we have no guarantee that such laws will be wise or just or applicable for every person. But the authority issuing these commands was different: God! He is the only one perfect, holy, all-knowing, timeless and free from sin. He is not motivated by personal gain or political issues. The principles stipulated in His Ten Commandments apply to all people at all times. They apply equally to each of us as they did to the Israelites who heard them for the first time. First of all, God identified Himself and reminded the hearers of His ever-present and unchanging nature. He was the God who made them, knew them, and was aware of their suffering which is why He had delivered them. The commands that followed were covenant responsibilities between the people and God. He promised to do His part, and He required that they do their part to keep the covenant. In light of the grace that had already experienced from this loving God, it would be almost unthinkable that they would turn to other gods. Other false deities were territorial; God alone is sovereign over all creation. The first command

features an inward focus which is related to the heart. There is NO one else like God and therefore, He ALONE is worthy of our attention and affection.

The second command builds on the first. What is improper worship? The first command deals with the heart. The second command deals with the eyes and the hands – an external focus. As used here, an idol is any image carved, shaped, or molded which the people might make to physically depict the invisible God. John 4:24 reminds us the God is spirit, so no visible object formed in a physical shape could possibly reflect his nature. God further told the people that He is a jealous God. This does not mean that God is jealous in the way the humans are – envying, mistrusting, showing insecurity or suspicion. It speaks of His great love and concern for his people. Following the one true God will bless future generations, while not keeping His commandments can bring about pain and sorrow for them.

### **Psalm 16:1-4a – from The Message**

#### **A David Song**

**16**<sup>1-2</sup> Keep me safe, O God, I've run for dear life to you. I say to GOD, "Be my Lord!" Without you, nothing makes sense.

<sup>3</sup> And these God-chosen lives all around—what splendid friends they make!

<sup>4</sup> Don't just go shopping for a god. Gods are not for sale. I swear I'll never treat god-names like brand-names.

David reminds us that God must have priority in our lives because He alone is good and completely trustworthy. We know from David's writings and his life that David knew God in a way that many people long for and yet never experience. David sought refuge – a trusted place of protection during times of distress –in the presence of God. David did not go to God only when he needed something. He made sure that his relationship with God was growing and always ongoing. He acknowledged that he had nothing good besides the Lord. David possessed many wonderful things in his lifetime, but they could not compare to what he found in his relationship with God, and everything he had came from God. David called attention to those who were unfaithful to God and worshiped false gods. Those people will experience only sorrows that multiply.

### **Psalm 16:9-11 -- from The Message**

<sup>9-10</sup> I'm happy from the inside out, and from the outside in, I'm firmly formed. You canceled my ticket to hell. That's not my destination!

<sup>11</sup> Now you've got my feet on the life path, all radiant from the shining of your face. Ever since you took my hand, I'm on the right way.

Do these words make you feel as joyful as they do for me??? They make my heart happy!! 😊

David emphasized that GOD is to be first because He alone deserves our worship and can provide what is most important to us – life – and specifically eternal life. Because God was his priority in life, he was not fearful of anything that might come either in his life or after death. God alone had revealed the path of life to him. David's psalm is a reminder that this life will end, and the path to true life can come only through faith in Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life.

**POINTS TO PONDER:** As Christians, we may think that we are following the command to have no idols in our lives. After all, we don't have a statute of Baal or even Buddha sitting in our living room. And we consider the crosses and other religious representations we may possess to be merely reminders and symbols of our faith, but certainly not objects that we worship as such. But what is idolatry on a deeper level?? Idols are those things that enter our life and take priority over our worship of the one true God. One of the definitions of idolatry is "extreme admiration, love, or reverence for something or someone." And that covers a lot of

territory, doesn't it? Anything that we admire, love, or reverence MORE THAN OUR ONE TRUE GOD is idolatry! Money, car, family, spouse....whatever we hold in our greatest esteem above God is breaking this commandment. Can you identify where you may be "worshiping an idol" in your own life?? How are you putting God first in all areas of your life?

And one final thought – Is it possible that some of us may set OURSELVES up as our own idols?? Do we sometimes put ourselves ahead of God and place ourselves on that "invisible pedestal"? Read the words of Paul to the Romans:

### **Romans 8:5-8 -- The Message**

<sup>5-8</sup>Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. **And God isn't pleased at being ignored.**

### **PRAY:**

Father, You are good and we love You. Remind us this week of the supreme value of giving You first place in every aspect of our hearts and lives. Amen.