

The First Commandment

What do you think God desires from us more than anything else?

- Our Sunday mornings.
- Our possessions.
- Our best effort.
- Our complete love and devotion.

Do you remember what Jesus Christ said when He was asked what the greatest commandment was? Read His answer below.

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

And He said to him,

"you shall love the LORD your God
with all your heart, and
with all your soul, and
with all your mind.'

"This is the great and foremost commandment.

Matthew 22:36-38

- Circle what our primary response to God must be.
- Underline the three phrases that explains how we must love God.
- Circle the key word common to each phrase.

How would you interpret what Jesus is saying? _____

Jesus taught that the primary thing God desires from us is our complete love and devotion; not our weekly attendance at a worship service, nor our offerings, nor even our commitments and efforts to serve Him diligently. He knows that all of these are important but will fall short absent the full devotion of our 'heart ... soul, and ... mind.'

And this is where the Ten Commandments begins. First things first, for the first commandment is the foundation for the other nine.

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- 2 "I am the LORD your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of slavery.
- 3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.

Exodus 20:2-3

- Underline who God proclaimed Himself to be (v2).
- Circle what 'you' shall not have' before God(v3).

Love is Not a Feeling

Contrary to contemporary songs, love is more than a superficial emotion in response to an attractive face or personality. True love is under the control of our will and chooses to esteem someone or something valuable and precious.

In light of the Love God has given us through the sacrifice of His Son, it is impossible not to esteem Him to the highest degree. For when you come to Know His Love for you, you will come to Love Him. And when you come to Love Him, you will want to Obey Him. If you don't want to Obey God, maybe it is because you don't Love Him. And if you don't Love God, maybe it is because you don't Know Him!

Don't wait to 'feel' that God is the most important Person in your life. By an act of your will, and in light of His unsurpassing Love for you, make Him the preeminent Person in your life right now!

God desires that our Obedience to Him be the result of our Love for Him!



1. What is the significance of God identifying Himself in verse 2? _____

2. What does this Commandment mean? _____

3. Why do you think God made this the first commandment? _____

4. How was this commandment relevant to the Israelites who were emerging from 400 years in Egypt? _____

5. How does the 'great commandment' taught by Christ relate to this one? _____

The First Commandment is prefaced with a declaration from God. To the Israelites, He declares Himself to be the 'LORD (their) God'. As you may already know, when the word LORD appears in the upper case in many Bibles as it does in this verse, it is translating the proper name for God (called the Tetragrammaton) and expressed in the letters YHWH.

In the Bible, names have meaning and significance. When Moses asked God in Exodus 3:13 what His name was, God replied 'I AM WHO I AM'. This is the intrinsic meaning of God's name. He is the Self-Existent One! And He alone was the reason Israel escaped bondage in Egypt ... not the cleverness of man nor luck.

The word translated 'gods' is the Hebrew 'elohim'. And yes, it is the identical word used for the One True God throughout the Old Testament text. It is a generic word used to refer to deity, both true and false, things god like, angels and even human rulers and judges. The context determines the meaning.

The 'gods' We Worship

Make a list of things in your life, or that you notice in other people's lives, that often become 'god's'.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Did you think of putting 'ourselves' as one of the things we worship. It probably ranks as the number one 'god' we place before the One who is God in Truth! Other things may be our possessions, social status, jobs, cars, money, hobbies, homes, friends, family, self reliance, philosophy, education, intellect, food, pleasures, etc.

1. How do we make gods of these objects in our lives? _____

2. Why do we make gods of these things? _____

3. Why is it harmful to worship these objects in place of God? _____

Why Worship the One True God

1. Because He is God! When God revealed His name to Moses as "I Am Who I Am", He showed Himself to be absolutely wise. Knowing of the name of something or someone is the acquisition of some measure of control over that thing. To know the name of an object is to begin unraveling the mystery of the unknown by placing it in a category of the known. (Note the Sciences' meticulous categorization of natural phenomena.)

Our 'gods' may even be things we would normally think of as being good, such as church activities and ministry. Do not forget that Jesus' staunchest opponents were the religious people of His day. They had made their religious activities their 'god' such that they failed to recognize the true God when He appeared right before them! Don't let your love for God be eclipsed by busyness for Him.

Note:

The truth is, we all (atheists included) believe in 'gods' ... things to which we choose to give our love, our devotion and our lives. They may be living or non-living, concrete or abstract, real or imagined. It doesn't matter. There is a compulsion in all of us to worship ... whether it be a thing, another person or even ourselves.

But unless the object of our worship is the Only True God, our worship is in vain. In the end it will be found empty and a complete waste of our time, energy and effort.

The only object worthy of our worship is the One True Eternal God, for He alone can save and satisfy for eternity!

However, **God's revealed Name** gives us no satisfaction. His Name simply reveals that **He Is ... Eternal, Independent** and completely **Self Sufficient**. Instead of less mysterious, God's Name makes Him more so. He is God because He Is!

The reason we ought to worship God solely and supremely is because not to do so would defy the truth of His Person. No one likes being deceived by others, but those who choose to worship other gods in place of the One True God have the unfortunate distinction of having deceived themselves!

2. Because God Alone Is Life! Proverbs 16:25 advises: "**There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.**" There is no disappointment greater than having come to the end of your life only to discover that you journeyed on the wrong path. Things on which you bet your life prove empty, and a life thought to be a success ends up as a loss. Jesus revealed the right path when He said, "**I Am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life...**" in John 14:6.

The First Commandment keeps us from a life lived in error, and places us on the Way of Truth concluding in Life Everlasting. It is the perfect initial step for all who desire to walk after God.

**“There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord,
Nor are there any works like Yours.
For You are great and do wondrous deeds;
You alone are God.**

Psalm 86:8,10