

does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” There are many in our world today who publicly claim to follow Jesus, but who teach many false things about who God is and what he has commanded. The first commandment warns us to be on guard against such false teachers, who try to justify their own idolatrous desires in the name of God.

Discussion Questions

- What sorts of false teachings about God are popular in our world today?
- In Exodus 32, the Israelites claimed to be worshiping God when they were really sacrificing to an idol. How can *we* recognize when we’re being deceived by our sinful desires, or when we’re trying to justify our own sin?

Day 5 – Review Q&A and recite memory verse

The conclusion to the story of the golden calf in Exodus 32 reminds us that our sin brings with it great punishment from God. To break the first commandment is no light thing. When we treat God as secondary, when we put something else in his place, when we fail to honor and worship him rightly, when we put our trust and hope in something else, when we say or believe false things about him – all these things bring along terrible consequences. We see the results for the Israelites in Exodus 32:35, “*Then the Lord sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made.*” Their idolatry brought with it suffering and death. So does our sin. Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of *all* sin – ours included – is death. Our sin deserves the wrath of God. But the glorious news of the gospel is that, although we (like the Israelites of Exodus 32) deserve God’s wrath, Jesus absorbed the punishment for sin upon himself on the cross: “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us*” (Galatians 3:13). Even though we have broken God’s commands – even though we have broken the very first commandment – if we trust in Christ, we are freed from the guilt of our sin. Now, in thankfulness and gratitude, we seek to honor God by following his commands and exalting him alone as worthy of our ultimate devotion.

Discussion Questions

- Why does God treat sin so seriously? Why does sin deserve eternal death and wrath, rather than just temporary consequences?
- What does it mean that Jesus “became a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13)?

Baptist Catechism

Family Worship Guide



West Oaks Baptist Church

(in preparation for Sunday, August 25th, 2024)

Baptist Catechism Question #50

Q: Which is the first commandment?

A: *The first commandment is, Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

Suggested Memory Verse

*Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before me.
(ESV)*

Day 1 – Review Q&A and recite memory verse

Have you ever wondered why *this* is the first commandment? If you've grown up in the church, you have likely heard or recited the Ten Commandments many times. It may seem extremely obvious to say, "we should worship God, and no one else!" Of course we should! But however obvious it may seem, it is important to keep the first commandment close to our minds and hearts because it tells us that we are creatures who were made to worship. Specifically, we were made *by God*, to worship *him*! But since we have been made to worship, this also means that if our focus drifts away from God and toward other things, we will end up worshipping them instead. Paul talks about this in Romans 1, when he describes the plight of sinful humanity: "*For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. . . . they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator*" (Romans 1:21, 25). If our focus is not set on God, it is exceedingly easy to allow other things to take first place in our lives – entertainment, or work, or family, or school, or social status, or many other things. Some of these can even be good things – for instance, we *should* love our family, work diligently, and pay attention in school! But if those things are *crowding out* God from our minds and hearts, then our worship is being directed to something other than God. Everyone worships something – so let our hearts be set on God first and foremost.

Discussion Question

- What sorts of things does our culture tend to worship, instead of God?
- What sorts of things might distract *us* from God? When we see this happening, what might we do to try to refocus on him?

Day 2 – Review Q&A and recite memory verse

Yesterday we discussed how the first commandment reflects the fact that we were made to worship. Today we will highlight another important aspect of the commandment: it shows us the importance of knowing *who* to worship. It says, "you shall have no other gods before *me*." But, how are we to know who, exactly, this God is to whom we owe worship? If we are made by him, if we are made to worship him, should we just automatically know who he is? Well... yes and no. God has revealed his existence to us through his creation: "*his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made*" (Romans 1:20). This means that everyone, on some level, knows that God exists. However, many things about God – including his gospel of salvation – are not revealed through nature. Instead, he tells us about himself through the Bible. One of the places God tells us about himself is in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which says, "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*" In Mark 12:29, Jesus calls this "the most important commandment." This tells us that God is not one among many options – he is the only true God, and we owe him our love and devotion. The first commandment exhorts us to turn to the Bible so that we might know, better and better, the God we worship.

Discussion Questions

- What are some ways that creation shows the existence and power of God?
- How well would you be able to know God if you didn't have the Bible? Would you be able to worship him properly?

Day 3 – Review Q&A and recite memory verse

If you've ever tried to hit a baseball, you'll know that the first rule is, "keep your eye on the ball!" If your eyes wander somewhere else as you're swinging, then you're surely going to miss the ball. Distractions can be costly. Fortunately, whether we can hit a baseball has no eternal significance. However, there are plenty of other areas where distractions can lead us into much more consequential and serious errors. We see an example of this in Exodus 32, immediately after the people of Israel have made their covenant with God at Mount Sinai. While Moses is away on the mountain meeting with God for forty days, the people quickly fall into idolatry: "*When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, 'Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him'*" (Exodus 32:1). Rather than waiting on Moses to return with God's instructions, they allowed impatience, fear, and discontent to drive them to making idols and worshipping false gods! If this could happen to a people who had just experienced God's visible presence, then it can happen to anyone! It is so easy to allow all sorts of concerns and distractions drive our attention away from God and toward ourselves – and so the first commandment constantly reminds us to keep our eyes focused on our God.

Discussion Questions

- Why were the people of Israel so quickly tempted to make an idol, after they had sworn a covenant with God?
- What sorts of day-to-day distractions do we face that might cause us to forget about God?

Day 4 – Review Q&A and recite memory verse

Yesterday we read about the people of Israel demanding that Aaron make them an idol to go ahead of them in their journey. As we read a little further in this story, we learn something else about temptations to break the first commandment: they can be very deceptive. After Aaron made the golden calf, the people worshiped it as the one "who brought you up out of the land of Egypt"; the next day, they sacrificed to the idol and called it "a feast to the LORD" (Exodus 32:4-6). Though they were engaged in blatant idolatry of the most obvious sort, they still claimed that what they were doing was actually worshipping the LORD! They claimed that the calf represented the divine power that delivered them from Egypt and claimed that sacrificing to it was a way to honor God. Many times, idolatry disguises itself. It pretends to respect God while actually dishonoring him. Jesus spoke of this in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who