

c) The key issue is how we can get into that right relationship with God where he is central in our lives. Read what Jesus says to his disciples in John 14:20-26.

- What is the relationship between Jesus and God (verse 20)?
- What is the relationship between Jesus and his disciples (verses 20, 21)?
- What is the test of whether we really love Jesus? (21,23a)
- How does the promise of verse 23b fulfill the requirement of the First Commandment?

d) Read 1 John 1: 9,10 and 2:1-6.

- If we fail to keep the commandments is there any hope for us?
- What has Jesus done to help us?
- Are we then free from the commandments?
- How then are we to live? (v. 6)

WANT MORE?

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SUMMARY

a) Discussion

The Bible goes to great lengths to help us realize that God is majestic and all powerful. What price do we pay for having a small sized God?

We often relegate God to a compartment of our lives, marked ‘Religion’ which can stay shut for much of the time. How can we let ‘God be God’ in our lives?

b) Practical suggestions

- Review your relationship with God. How well do you know him? Are there things that need to be sorted out?
- Think about some recent decisions you have made and actions you have taken. Did your relationship to God play any part in them? Think about decisions ahead; how can you ensure that God is allowed to play a part?
- If your spiritual health was given a check-up, what would the verdict be? That you should give up unhealthy habits? Take more spiritual exercise? Take remedial medicine? Have radical surgery?
- How can we help each other to serve God more faithfully?

FOR PRAYER

- Pray that we would put God first in our lives.
- Pray that we would love God with our hearts, minds and actions.
- Pray that churches across the land would be totally committed to God.



HAVE NO GODS BUT GOD

Commandment 1: “Do not worship any other gods besides me.” (Exodus 20:3)

The first commandment comes to the heart of things; it is about making sure that we worship the right God and no-one else. God wants a relationship with us but he is only prepared to be involved in one that is totally exclusive.

OPENER - Discuss one of the following.

a) Let’s define religion as ‘that which gives a life meaning or purpose.’ On this basis:

- What are the main religions in our region?
- What demands of time or money do they make on their devotees?
- Where and what are their temples?
- What rites or practices do they carry out?

b) Everybody likes to think that they are free and able to choose to do whatever they want. Is this an illusion? Doesn’t everybody serve something or someone?

STUDY - This is divided into an Old and a New Testament part.

The Old Testament

a) Read Exodus 20:1-3. Although verse three is normally considered the first of the commandments the verses immediately before it are helpful in understanding what this commandment really means. The phrase 'the LORD' comes from the name 'Yahweh,' the personal name of the God who had made a covenant with the Israelites.

- The covenant was God's solemn agreement to protect and bless the Israelites. Why do you think God starts the commandments by using his covenant name and reminding the people that he has just saved them out of Egypt?
- Do you think the commandments were a) rules someone had to keep in order that God would love them? b) the appropriate response to being one of God's saved and loved people? (Our series of Galatians at the beginning of the year was helpful in answering this question. You may want to re-read some of the many passages that Paul teaches about this. i.e. Galatians 5:1-4)
- Someone might say 'Why can't God share worship with other gods?' How would you answer?



b) In Joshua 24 we read how, once established in the Promised Land, Joshua led the Israelites in a ceremony where they renewed their covenant vows. Read Joshua 24:1- 28.

- What, according to verses 2-13, has the LORD done for the Israelites?
- What does he expect as a response?
- In verse 19 Joshua appears to express reservations about the people's reply. Is he a pessimist or a realist?
- How does this whole passage underline the seriousness of the commitment that the LORD expects of his people?
- How often does the word 'serve' or 'served' occur in this passage? Does this just mean they had an obligation to worship him? What would it have meant for the Israelites to serve God? What does it mean for us? What – if any – ceremonies of covenant renewal do Christians hold?

c) But who is this God that we are called to serve exclusively? Isaiah gives something of an answer. Read Isaiah 40:18-31

- What does this passage say about the temptation we have to worship either things that we have made (18-20) or things that we have done (v.23,24)?
- How is God superior to either our idols or our achievements?
- What practical application of these truths is found in verses 27-31?

The New Testament

Much of what Jesus taught focused on the need to make God the centre of our lives; in order to become part of the kingdom of God we have to allow God to be king.

a) Jesus himself was specifically tempted over this commandment. Read Matthew 4: 8-10.

- Given the size of the offer that the Devil makes, how important do you think it was to him to break Jesus' commitment to the First Commandment?
- Why does Jesus quote Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:13) back to the Devil?
- What lessons are there here for us in regard to our commitment to worship and serve God?

b) Read Matthew 22:37-40. Jesus is here quoting the verses from Deuteronomy 6:4,5 that lay at the heart of the Jewish faith.

- What does verse 37 say is our duty towards God?
- What would that mean practically for us?
- Can we keep this standard?

This GroupLife study guide has been adapted from 10+, by J. John.