**2nd Commandment Discussion Guide**

**Exodus 20 :4-6 ; Deuteronomy 5 :8-10**

**\* Sermon Overview**

In this sermon, Pastor Aaron will emphasize that God longs for a relationship with us. He will warn us of the deceiving and alluring nature of idols. He will challenge us to surrender and serve the One who has redeemed us and is restoring us.

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to cover all that is found within these questions in your community group. These questions will give you a grasp of what the text says and means so that we can think through how to apply the text to our lives.

**1. What is the context and meaning of the 2nd Commandment?**

*The first commandment tells who to worship, and the second commandment prescribes how to worship. There are four parts to this commandment (borrowed from Philip Ryken): (1) Rule; (2) Reason; (3) Warning; (4) Promise. First, the rule/command is that we are to worship God in spirit and truth, not by carved images. Second, the reason we ought to worship this way is because of who God is and what God has done—He is jealous for relationship with us. Third, the warning foretells of judgment upon those who worship God falsely, on those who hate God. Fourth, the promise is that God’s steadfast love will be on those forever who worship Him rightly, that is, by keeping His commandments. In this commandment, we are reminded that God pursues a relationship with us and that God sets the boundaries for how we can enjoy relationship with Him, which again is exclusive allegiance (like the first commandment).*

*As you think about this commandment, ask the following questions: What is an idol? Why do our hearts create and worship idols? How can we guard ourselves and one another from idolatry? Why does God command that we not use idols to worship Him?*

*For Old Testament stories/passages related to idols/idolatry, see Exodus 32-34 (Golden Calf); Leviticus 26:1; Numbers 16:31-34 (Korah’s Rebellion); Deuteronomy 4:15-20, 23-24, 25-31; 7:9-10; 16:22; Judges 7:24-25 (Achan’s Sin); 1 Kings 18 (God versus gods); 2 Kings 9:30-37 (Jehu’s Idolatry); 10:18-29 (Jehu’s Idolatry); Psalm 115; Isaiah 44:9-17; Romans 1:24-25; Acts 17:16-34 (Paul at Mars Hill)*

*Elyse Fitzpatrick defines idolatry as “love gone wrong.”*

*Philip Ryken writes, “Having other gods and not making idols are two different regulations. The first commandment has to do with worshiping the right God….The second commandment has to do with worshiping the right God in the right way….Whereas the first commandment forbids us to worship false gods, the second commandment forbids us to worship the true God falsely. How we worship matters nearly as much to God as whom we worship.” He continues, “Whereas the first commandment forbids false gods, the second forbids false worship.”*

*Al Mohler writes, “The first commands us to worship only the one true God, and the second commands us to worship Him as He would be worshiped.”*

*Alistair Begg writes, “The first commandment forbids the worship of any false god, and the second demands that we do not worship the true God in an unworthy manner. It is not enough to worship the correct God. We must worship the correct God correctly!”*

*Edmund Clowney writes, “True idolatry, so hated by God, is the worship of anything or anyone other than God.” He defines an idol “as anything that functions as a focus for our worship.”*

*Eugene Merrill writes, “To bow down is to recognize the sovereignty of a god, but to serve is to express commitment to that sovereignty in a practical, tangible way. Israel had been redeemed from bondage or service in Egypt in order to serve Yahweh. To serve other gods, then, was to reverse the exodus and go back under bondage, thus betraying the grace and favor of Yahweh.”*

**2. What does the 2nd Commandment teach us about the character of God?**

*The second commandment is grounded in the character of God. The reason why we are not to worship God with graven/carved images is because God is jealous, just, and loving. First, God is jealous for relationship with His children. He desires for those whom He has redeemed and is restoring into the image of Christ to worship Him rightly and reverently, which is done by listening to His voice/Word and loving Him (demonstrated by keeping His Word). The challenge with attempting to worship God through idols is that idols do not and cannot represent and reflect Him truly, but rather they end up representing and reflecting a god that man desires and creates, exposing our own sinful hearts and need for a Savior. Second, God is just, which means that He will punish those who disobey His Word and who hate His name. Third, God pours out His love on those who love and keep His commandments, which we are only able to do as we’ve been redeemed by the blood of Christ, the image of God, and indwelt by the power of the Spirit to walk in obedience to His commands.*

*As for the warning in verse 5, note two things: (1) The sins of the fathers influence the children; (2) The children, like their fathers, hate God, which is the reason for the punishment of God upon them (see the phrase “who hate me,” which includes the father’s and the children’s actions toward God). As for the promise, God pours out His steadfast love on those who love and keep His commandments, but it is only through His steadfast love in Christ that we can love and keep His commandments. For other instances of the warning and promise nature of this commandment, see Exodus 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 7:9-10.*

*Idols do not and cannot represent and reflect the character of God because God is infinite, God is self-existent/eternal, God is sovereign, God is jealous, God is righteous/pure, God is a spirit, and God is a speaking God. As you think about each of these attributes of God, how would an idol undercut and destroy these attributes of God?*

*As you think about this commandment, how does it reflect the character of God? How can we explain the jealousy of God? How do we see God’s desire for a relationship with us on display in this commandment?*

*Philip Ryken writes, “This was the problem with idolatry all along: It created a flash image of God that was inadequate to his deity and unworthy of his majesty. God is infinite and invisible. He is omnipotent and omnipresent. He is a living spirit. Therefore, to carve him into a piece of wood or stone is to deny his attributes, the essential characteristics of his divine being. An idol makes the infinite God finite, the invisible God visible, the omnipotent God impotent, the all-present God local, the living God dead, and the spiritual God material. In short, it makes him the exact opposite of what he actually is. Thus the whole idea of idolatry rests on the absurdity of human beings trying to make a true image of God. An idol is not the truth, but a lie. It is a god who cannot see, know, act, love, or save.”*

*J. I. Packer writes, “God ends the second commandment (Ex 20:5-6) by reminding us of his real nature as the jealous God who seeks total loyalty, the just God who judges his foes as they deserve, and the gracious God who shows ‘steadfast love to thousands of generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.’ And how should we keep this one? By reining in our disordered imaginations and reverently accepting that God is as he says he is.”*

*Philip Ryken writes, “A holy jealousy is one that guards someone’s rightful possession. The most obvious example is the love between a husband and wife.” He continues, “His (God’s) love is exclusive, passionate, intense—in a word, jealous.”*

*Christopher Wright writes, “Jealousy is God’s love protecting itself.”*

*Rob Schenck writes, “Godly jealousy is not the insecure, insane, and possessive human jealousy that we often interpret this word to mean. Rather, it is an intensely caring devotion to the objects of His love, like a mother’s jealous protection of her children, a father’s jealous guarding of his home.”*

**3. How does the 2nd Commandment reveal our sinfulness and need for Christ?**

*As image bearers of God, we are created to reflect and represent God (put another way, to worship Him in all that we think, say, do, and desire). Yet, due to the fall and apart from saving faith in Christ, our hearts are a “factory of idols” (as John Calvin said). In our fallen state and apart from Christ’s saving work, we serve self and create gods/idols that reflect our sinful hearts. However, like the Hebrews in Exodus 20, God has redeemed us out of slavery to sin and idolatry by the blood of Christ, who is the image of God (see Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:3), and He is restoring us by the power of the Spirit into the image of Christ day by day as we love Him and keep His commandments (see Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10). As redeemed children of God, God calls us to worship Him, to love Him, and to obey Him. He is jealous for our hearts, and He enables us to be free from the bondage of idolatry to walk in the righteousness of Christ.*

*As you think about this commandment, how does idolatry play itself out in the hearts of unbelievers? How does idolatry tempt and ensnare believers? How can we guard our hearts against idolatry?*

*Edmund Clowney writes, “The Father has offered us a true image to worship, and his jealousy is aroused if we choose anything but the incarnate Lord Jesus as the focus of our worship. Jesus is the true and only object of worship.”*

*Philip Ryken writes, “Rather than remaking God into our image, we need to be remade into his image.”*

*Tony Merida writes, “The law drives us to Jesus for forgiveness and a new heart, and the Spirit then empowers for obedience.”*

**4. How might the 2nd Commandment apply to our lives today?**

*Here are three points of application (not an exhaustive list by any means): (1) God demands right worship. With this in mind, remember that Scripture is our guide for how we are to worship God rightly and truly. Remember that God is jealous for our hearts to worship Him in all of life. Think on these questions: How does God’s Word instruct/shape our corporate worship services? How does God’s Word instruct/shape our moment by moment worship of Him? (2) God hates idolatry. Think about why God hates idolatry. Ponder what it is about idols that lures our heart from right worship of God. Examine if we have any idols that rule our hearts now or have a foothold in our lives. If so, repent and return to loving God. (3) God knows the influence of fathers. In this passage, God warns that he will bring judgment upon those who hate Him. How might the iniquity of fathers lead children into the same iniquity? How ought parents to be aware of the examples they are setting for their children? How do you see your children learning how to worship God from your example?*

*ESV Study Bible: “This is one of the grievous aspects of sin, that it harms others besides the sinner himself. But this general principle is qualified in two ways: First, it applies only to****those who hate me****, i.e., to those who persist in unbelief as enemies of God. The cycle of sin and suffering can be broken through repentance. Second, the suffering comes to****the third and the fourth generation,*** *while God shows****steadfast love****(*[*v. 6*](https://www.esv.org/Exodus%2B20%3A6/)*) to another group of people, namely, to****thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments****(i.e., to the thousandth generation).”*

*Alistair Begg writes, “All sin has a ‘domino’ effect, and parents ought to ponder the punishment their children will face for their own sins which they have learned from the sorry example of their parents.”*

*Philip Ryken writes, “What are some of the ways we manufacture our own gods?” He answers, “We make an idol whenever we worship an image rather than listening to the Word….We also make an idol whenever we turn God into something we can manipulate….We also make an idol whenever we choose to worship God for some of his attributes, but not others.”*

**\* Application Questions**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions in your community group. Also, please feel freedom to adapt the question or to create a question that will best help your community group “be doers of the Word” (James 1:22), for you know the stage and situation of your group members.

1. What is idolatry? What is the sin(s) that prompts idolatry? What makes idolatry so appealing?

2. What are idols that we are tempted to serve/worship? How can we guard ourselves and one another from idolatry? How can we discern idols in our own lives?

3. Why does God forbid worship through idolatry? How do idols misrepresent the nature and character of God? What does this commandment teach us about God?

4. How does this commandment expose our sin and point to our need for Christ? How does this commandment call for Israel to be distinct from her neighbors?

5. When you hear that God is jealous, how do you respond? How are we to understand the jealousy of God? How does knowing that God desires relationship with us and provides a way for us to have relationship with Him affect the way we respond to idolatry?

6. In this commandment, we see the power and influence of parents on their children. How can parents be aware of how their actions set the example for how their children will worship? How can parents intentionally instruct and model how to worship God in all of life? Have you ever had your child point out an idol in your life?

7. How do we love God and keep His commandments? How can we practically obey this commandment?

8. If you are struggling to facilitate conversation in your group or if you are looking to start conversation in your group, here are some questions to prompt conversation:

 A. Question of Impression—What stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Why did it stand out to you?

 B. Question of Application—How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

 C. Question of Clarity—If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

 D. Question of Reflection—How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week?

 E. Question of Mission—How will you pass on what you have heard, learned, and applied this week to another believer this week so that they may know and follow Jesus? How will what you heard, learned, and applied this week equip you to share Jesus with an unbeliever this week where you live, work, and play?

9. In his book, *Asking the Right Questions,* Matthew Harmon gives the following questions for understanding and applying the Bible:

 A. Understanding the Bible

 1. What do we learn about God?

 a. Look for God’s character (who he is, what he is like)

 b. Look for God’s conduct (what he is doing)

 c. Look for God’s concerns (what thing/events/people he is concerned about)

 2. What do we learn about people?

 a. Look for aspects of what it means to be created in God’s image

 b. Look for the fallen condition

 c. Look for how God’s people should live

 3. What do we learn about relating to God?

 a. Look for things to praise and thank God for

 b. Look for sin to confess and repent

 c. Look for promises and truths to believe

 4. What do we learn about relating to others?

 a. Look for how we should interact with and treat others

 b. Look for ways to pursue reconciliation with others

 c. Look for specific ways to love, serve, and care for others

 B. Applying the Bible

 a. What does God want me to think/understand?

 b. What does God want me to believe?

 c. What does God want me to desire?

 d. What does God want me to do?

**\* Sermon Take Away**

Knowing that God is jealous for a relationship with you, repent of idols and turn to God in worship, love, and obedience.

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—2 John; Isaiah 28

2. Tuesday—3 John; Isaiah 29

3. Wednesday—Jude; Isaiah 30

4. Thursday—Revelation 1; Isaiah 31

5. Friday—Revelation 2; Isaiah 32

6. Saturday—Revelation 3; Isaiah 33

7. Sunday—Revelation 4; Isaiah 34

* **Ten Commandments Series**

1. June 24th—3rd Commandment

2 July 1st—4th Commandment

3 July 8th—5th Commandment

4 July 15th—6th Commandment

5 July 22nd—7th Commandment

6. July 29th—8th Commandment

7. August 5th—9th Commandment

8. August 12th—10th Commandment

* **Vision Series/Journey of Discipleship Series**

1. August 19th—TBD

2. August 26th—TBD

3. September 2nd—TBD

* **Gospel of Mark Series**

1. September 9th—Mark 1

2. September 16th—Mark 2

3. September 23rd—Mark 3

4. September 30th—Mark 4

5. October 7th—Mark 5

6. October 14th—Mark 6

7. October 21st—Mark 7

8. October 28th—Mark 8

9. November 4th—Mark 9

10. November 11th—Mark 10

11. November 18th—Mark 11

12. November 25th—Mark 12

13. December 2nd—Mark 13

14. December 9th—Mark 14

15. December 16th—Mark 15

16. December 30th—Mark 16

* **Stand Alone Sermons**

1. December 23rd—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

2. December 24th—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

1. For the discussion guide, I used the following resources: Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*; R. Alan Cole, *Exodus*; John Currid, *Exodus*;J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*; John Currid, *Deuteronomy*; Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*; Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy*; Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Exodus*; Al Mohler, *Words from the Fire*; Alistair Begg, *Pathway to Freedom*; Edmund Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*; J. I. Packer, *Keeping the Ten Commandments*; Philip Ryken, *Written in Stone*; Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*; Mark Rooker, *The Ten Commandments*; *ESV Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)