

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

“NO OTHER GODS”

For individual study or group discussion

Last week, we noted in the preamble to the *Ten Commandments* that the authority of the Sinaitic Law was founded and established with the words “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Deuteronomy 5:1-6). As we continue our study in verse 7, God delivers his first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me.” Within this injunction of “**No Other Gods**” we find **the greatest commandment** which *rightly commands our exclusive worship of the LORD*, **the broken commandment**, *in that we perpetually pursue idols that never satisfy*, and **the only cure for our idolatrous hearts**, *which is the expulsive power of a new affection through the Gospel of Jesus*.

The first commandment is also called by Christ “the greatest commandment” because it rightly commands our exclusive worship of the LORD. To accurately understand Jesus’ words in Matthew 22:37-38, Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck explains the exclusivity of Christ’s statement: “Viewed properly, there is only one duty, that of love, which is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:10). And there actually is only one object of that love, namely God. Everything else—people, angels, nature, art, and so forth—may and must be loved only in God and for God.”¹

- Refer to Genesis 1:1, Psalm 95:6-7, and Colossians 1:15-20. On what basis does God rightly command our exclusive worship?

The first commandment becomes the “broken commandment” because we perpetually pursue idols that can never satisfy. The 1961 children’s novel *Where the Red Fern Grows* tells the story of young Billy Coleman who more than anything wanted to be a coon hunter. In order to train his dogs to hunt, he needed a raccoon pelt. But despite multiple attempts to trap one, Billy came back empty-handed. Billy’s grandpa advises him that the best way to catch a coon is by placing a shiny object at the bottom of a trap: “You see, a coon is a curious little animal. Anything that is bright and shiny attracts him. He will reach in and pick it up. When his paw closes on the bright object it balls up, and when he starts to pull it from the hole, the sharp ends of the nails will gouge into his paw and he’s caught.”² All the raccoon needs to do in order to escape from the trap is to release the bait. But it will not. It’s dead set on keeping it. Like the raccoon, we too have difficulty releasing our idols. It’s only when we let go of our grip on them that we will be free to worship God wholeheartedly.

- We can’t worship God with all our hearts if we’re holding onto idols. We have to let go of those things that pull us away from God. According to Matthew 6:33, what should our hearts be pursuing? Read Psalm 86. Describe how the psalmist worships God (vv. 8-13).
- In Ecclesiastes, Solomon lists various vain pursuits as “striving after the wind” (See Ecclesiastes 1:14, 16-17; 2:10-11, 16-17, 26; 4:4, 16). What are the pursuits in your life that deter or replace your worship of God? Meditate on Psalm 135 this week and pray for the Spirit’s help to guide you in worship.

The only cure for our idolatrous hearts is the expulsive power of a new affection through the Gospel of Jesus. Like Eustace, who had to be de-scaled by Aslan in C.S. Lewis’ book *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, we too must allow Jesus to lay us bare. We must be un-dragoned from our idolatrous hearts by the power of the Gospel of Christ. How can we cultivate this new affection? By daily remembering and rediscovering God’s Word, as he grants us the grace to “put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

- Compare Deuteronomy 5:7 with John 14:15. Does your love for Jesus elicit obedience to his Law? According to Colossians 3:5-17, how do we experience renewal? What will the new self look like?

DATE: January 15, 2023

SPEAKER: Brian/Frank

SERIES: Deuteronomy

PASSAGE: Deuteronomy 5:7

Family Dinner Table

The First Commandment

A quote attributed to Mark Twain reads, “In the beginning God created man in his own image, and ever since, he’s been trying to return the favor.” The first commandment assumes a fundamental characteristic of human nature: we were created to worship. But being slaves to sin (Romans 6:20), we seek to serve and worship ourselves rather than our Creator (Romans 1:25).

The Westminster Confession of Faith, along with its Larger and Shorter Catechisms, were written in 1646 by an assembly of divines who were called upon by the English Parliament to advise on reforming the worship and government of the English church.

As a family, read through the [WCF Shorter Catechism Q&A 45-48](#) and discuss the following questions together:

- Looking at questions 45-48, what pattern does the WCF use for teaching the first commandment?
- How does this pattern of Q&A help you to understand how these commandments have a broader application in your life?
- Based on Sunday’s sermon, how does the first commandment provide a foundation for the other nine commandments?
- Read Isaiah 45:22. How is the first commandment the bedrock for the doctrine of justification by faith alone?

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Hope for the Inner City,
strategic partner ministry

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Third Millennium Ministries,
world missions partner

¹Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Ethics, Volume 2: The Duties of the Christian Life*, Ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2021), 2: 101-102.

²Rawls, Wilson. *Where the Red Fern Grows*. 1961. New York. Delacorte Press. 72