**1st Commandment Discussion Guide**

**Exodus 20:1-3 ; Deuteronomy 5 :1-7**

**\* Sermon Overview**

In this sermon, Pastor Aaron will review the Exodus story to remind us who God is and what God has done. Because this God is faithful, the warrior, and the redeemer, he is worthy of and demands our exclusive worship. He will call us to worship God alone.

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions**

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 1st Commandment?**

*Before giving the 10 Commandments, God reminds Israel of who He is and what He has done—He is their Redeemer. Each of the 10 Commandments are rooted/grounded in this story of redemption, this story of who God is and what He has done. In the first commandment, God demands wholehearted allegiance/loyalty/love. The Israelites have just witnessed that He is worthy of such obedience because He alone delivered them from the gods of the Egyptians.*

*As you prepare to lead discussion this week, take time to read over Exodus 1-20 to refresh yourself of the story of the Exodus. Also, think about these questions: How does the story of God’s grace relate to God’s law? How can we cultivate a heart that loves the Lord alone? How can we guard our heart from spiritual adultery? What are other passages/stories throughout the Bible where you see the first commandment illustrated/demanded/applied?*

*For passages related to the first commandment, see Exodus 12:12; 15:11; Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; 6:4-9, 13-15; Joshua 24; 1 Kings 18; Psalms 86:10; 115; Isaiah 42:8; 44:6, 8, 16-20; 45:5-6, 18, 21; Jeremiah 9:23-24; 10:3, 5; Haggai 1; Malachi (shows unfaithfulness); Matthew 6:24; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 8:19-21; 11:27-28; John 14:15; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 John 5:21.*

*Alistair Begg writes, “The Christian’s supreme loyalty is to the Lord Jesus, who loved him and gave Himself for him.” He continues, “God demands our exclusive loyalty and we find that in this complete devotion to the one God there is freedom. This is the freedom that comes from knowing that we are not held in the grip of blind forces or tossed about on the sea of chance but instead that in all things God is at work for the good of those who love Him. Surely providence is a soft pillow!”*

**2. What does the 1st Commandment teach us abut the character of God?**

*Each week we will think about what the commandment teaches us about God. In the first commandment, we are reminded of the following attributes and actions of God (by no means is this list exhaustive): (1) God is Redeemer/Warrior; (2) God is Gracious/Merciful; (3) God is Powerful (more powerful than any false gods of Egypt); (4) God is Love; (5) God is Jealous.*

*Why is it helpful for us to think about how this commandment is related to and flows from the character/actions of God? How might dwelling upon who God is and what He has done cultivate a heart that responds to Him in loving obedience? What other attributes and actions of God can you see in this first commandment?*

*J. I. Packer writes, "What God is and has done determines what his people must be and do. So study of the Decalogue should start by seeing what it tells us about God."*

*NIV Zondervan Study Bible: “God commands Israel to observe these stipulations not in order to become his people but because this is how his people, whom he has rescued from oppression, should respond.”*

**3. How does the 1st Commandment reveal our sinfulness and need for Christ?**

*Before coming to faith in Christ, our hearts plagued by sin sought to worship only self (or some other idol/false god). In this first commandment, we are exposed as idolaters, as spiritual adulterers who need the grace of God to free us from bondage/slavery to idols/false gods. In God’s grace, we have been redeemed out of sin, slavery to idolatry, and death so that me might walk in wholehearted obedience to the Lord. By God’s grace and the empowering of the Spirit, we can walk in loyalty to and love for God alone.*

*As you think about this question, how can you see the exposing power of the first commandment to unbelievers? For believers, how do we know the empowering grace of the Spirit to help us love God alone with all of our heart, mind, strength, and soul? Why is it important to remember that we need the grace of God to obey the commands and that our obedience flows out of the grace of God?*

*Samuel Bolton, a Puritan author, writes, “The law sends us to the Gospel, that we may be justified, and the Gospel sends us to the law again to enquire what is our duty in being justified.”*

*Alistair Begg writes, “It is, as we understand God’s love to us in Christ, that we find ourselves delighting in God’s Law written in our hearts.” Also, he writes, “He is not justified by keeping the Law, but having been justified, he keeps the Law.”*

*Ralph Erskine writes, “When once the fiery Law of God Has chas’d me to the Gospel Road; Then back unto the holy law Most Kindly Gospel-grace will draw.”*

*J. I. Packer writes, "Loving obedience, joyful loyalty, and wholehearted devotion to his Father was Jesus' way; this same attitude to both the Father and the Son must now be ours." Also, he writes, "The God who redeemed Jews from Egyptian slavery has redeemed Christians from bondage to sin and to Satan at the cost of Calvary. Now it is by keeping his law that the liberty thus secured is to be preserved."*

**4. How might the 1st Commandment apply to our lives today?**

*In each of our lives, we can apply this command practically in two ways: (1) Cultivate godly practices/patterns of life that fan into flame our wholehearted devotion/love for the Lord alone; (2) Repent of idols/false gods in our lives.*

*As you think through these two ways to apply this commandment, use these questions to help you: What are some godly practices/patterns of life that help us cultivate a love for God (for example, Bible reading, meditating upon gospel truths, prayer, evangelism, etc.)? What are idols/false gods that lead us to be spiritual adulterers, to be those who have divided loyalty? Note that idols will be the major topic of the second commandment so I would encourage you to spend your time this week thinking through application point # 1 above (cultivating godly practices/patterns of life that help us grow in love for God).*

*Note that for this question each week we will think through how the command applies practically to our lives, taking into account the various stages and situations of life that we face. I encourage you to think through how each of these commandments can be applied in the lives of your community group members, taking into account their stage and situation of life.*

*Thomas Schreiner writes, “The Lord delivers his people by grace, and they are to respond to his redemptive work on their behalf with obedience.”*

*ESV Study Bible: “Obedience to the Ten Commandments and laws in general therefore does not earn the relationship but is a response of faith to God’s grace.”*

**\* 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. Why is it important to remember the context in which the 10 Commandments are given? How does remembering that these 10 Commandments flow from God’s delivering/redeeming grace help guard us against the dangers of legalism and license?

2. Before giving the 10 Commandments, God declares who He is and what He has done for Israel (see Exodus 20:2; Exodus 1-20; note that the imperatives/commands are grounded in and flow out of the indicatives/statements of who God is). What is your testimony, the story of how God delivered you from sin and death to walk in newness of life? How can we daily remind ourselves of who we are in Christ? Why is it important for us to preach the gospel to ourselves daily? If you preach the gospel to yourself daily, what are the gospel truths that are essential to remember?

3. What does this command reveal about the character of God? How does knowing God lead to following/obeying God? How have you experienced the faithfulness of the Lord and the Lord as your warrior and redeemer?

4. What/who do you think about most? What/who do you love most? What do these answers reveal about our obedience to this first commandment? How is it that Christ empowers/enables us to obey the first commandment?

5. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Mark 3:31-35; 12:30-31. What are some practices that help us cultivate love for God? What are some resources that help us know God so that we may follow God?

6. What are sins or patterns/practices of life that keep us from worshiping the Lord wholeheartedly and exclusively? How should we deal with these things?

7. 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?

8. 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**

Worship the Lord alone because of who He is and what He has done.

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—2 Peter 2; Isaiah 21

2. Tuesday—2 Peter 3; Isaiah 22

3. Wednesday—1 John 1; Isaiah 23

4. Thursday—1 John 2; Isaiah 24

5. Friday—1 John 3; Isaiah 25

6. Saturday—1 John 4; Isaiah 26

7. Sunday—1 John 5; Isaiah 27

* **Ten Commandments Series**

1. June 17th—2nd Commandment

2. June 24th—3rd Commandment

3 July 1st—4th Commandment

4 July 8th—5th Commandment

5 July 15th—6th Commandment

6 July 22nd—7th Commandment

7. July 29th—8th Commandment

8. August 5th—9th Commandment

9. 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)