

Section: The Law

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Lesson 37**

**Question 46- “You shall not make for yourself an idol”**

Pastor Joshua Kirstine

Tonight I am honored to get to teach on the second commandment and why it’s important.

Look with me at…

**Q46. Why does God give the second commandment: You shall not make for yourself an idol?**

So we will serve, worship, and glorify God and nothing else.

I am thankful for Pastor Steve’s teaching on this first commandment last week. As he taught there are so many ways that we can worship anything but the only one who is truly worthy of our worship and devotion is God Himself.

**If you remember Q15 in the WOTC is Why did God make us?**

God made us to glorify Him, so His glory would be known and praised.

Church, our worship of God is why we are here!! It is why we exist!!!

The last thing God’s creation should do is betray the fundamental reason why exist to worship and glorify anything instead of HIM!

*So the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me.”*

Seems pretty clear and straight forward, right?

So why does God take this subject to another level with the second commandment, “***You shall not make for yourself an idol?”***

**I think it’s because of how we all can be prone in our sin to compartmentalize.**

**While most of us would say without hesitation that we do not worship any *other god* but only the one true God.**

**There is another way that we can give our worship or first love away to things in creation.. Things that are not even trying to be god’s but they can begin to be treated like god’s in our lives. Scripture calls these things idols.**

The simple truth is: when we are given to our sin and flesh we find all kinds of ways to worship and live for things in creation…. instead of the Creator.

And so **the Idol Factory of our hearts begins to churn out idols.**

John Calvin, the 16th century reformer made the memorable point,

***“Our hearts are ‘idol factories’***

**Turn with me to Romans 1:18-25 and hear Paul’s clear explanation of this…**

**Romans 1:18-25**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. **19**For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. **20**For 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. So they are without excuse. **21**For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22**Claiming to be wise, they became fools, **23**and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. **24**Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, **25**because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Notice with me that man’s sin problem, our very rebellion, ***is grounded*** in our worshiping things that are not God. This is why God gives so much clarity to idolatry in His law.

To help us dive further into the important reasons for the 2nd commandment in the decalogue

Let me remind you of another Catechism question that we have already taught on and that is..

**Q34. What is the sin of idolatry?**

Idolatry is worshiping or finding hope, identity, significance, purpose, or security in anything other than in God, our Creator.

If we are going to obey the command to *“****not make for yourself an idol****”* then we need to first be remind of what an idol is.

**When someone says “idol worship or idolatry”, what is commonly thought of?**

**Often, a person thinks of an idol as “a figure made of stone or wood”. Right?**

In this, a person pictures someone prostrate on the ground before an object for religious devotion or assumed magical power. While this is idolatry, it is so much more than this.

***One author said*, “**We have, in effect, distanced ourselves from the whole idea of idolatry **by pushing it out to the extreme cultural and psychological margins of life.**”

But This is such a great win for the enemy. When we can believe that something so threatening to our lives is not a threat at all. When we think that something so present and potentially active in my life is not anywhere to be seen… When this happens we are primed to be suckered right into it.

One of my favorite movie quotes is, ***“the greatest trick the devil every pulled is to convince the world that he didn’t exist”***. How true this is.

We are in great jeopardy to believe that we can just live this life and never do any real business with the spiritual realities that are all around us and are really most important.

The devil wants us to be consumed with our cancer or with our kids success or our physical looks so that we won’t have time or conviction to do business with what matters most….

**What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and why it is the most important and eternal impact on my life and destiny.**

Another great deception of the devil…. is to convince mankind that idolatry is a tribal thing.. it is not anything that you and I struggle with. But this couldn’t be further from the truth.

This is why this second command is so important for us. This is God’s grace and love to help us be aware of the dangers of idolatry. Listen to His words in…

**Exodus 20:4-5** “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God ...”

Quickly, let me touch on something important here.

Some of you hear that God is jealous and you think.. but isn’t jealousy a sin?

**The answer is no. Let me explain..**

**God’s Jealousy is Righteous**

In this I want you to see that jealousy is not always sinful for negative. When it is rightly applied is a Godly attribute and can be a God honoring thing for us as well. When it’s rightly applied.

The Apostle Paul says in **2 Corinthians 11:2** For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

Paul shares his divine jealousy for his blood bought brothers and sisters in Christ to remain faithful to Christ who is the eternal head and husband of the church, His bride.

So, there is a righteous desire that we can have for people to be whom God made them to be.

A divine or righteous jealousy is when a spouse wants their spouse to be faithful to the covenant God has bound them together in oneness in.

A divine or righteous jealousy is when a parent wants their child to be obedient to them as God has commanded children to obey their parents.

On the other hand, Sinful jealousy has at its root covetousness.

To covet is to strongly desire something belonging to someone else.

We see this in **James 4:2** You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

Covetousness is a dissatisfaction with what God has given us and an obsessive fascination with what He has given someone else.  Sinful jealousy is bitter envy that causes us to look at others with distain and causes division and all the negative consequences of the unsatisfied heart we looked at last week.

A sinful jealousy is when you want your body to look like another person’s body.

Or the car you drive to be like the one your neighbor has.

So we must see that God has a righteous jealousy for his people to be faithfully committed to and obedient to Him who reigns above all things and who is worthy of their devotion and praise.

He rightly wants all of creation to honor Him as God.

This is a good and right expectation of God for all of his creation.   
  
Remember the Moral law best clarified in the 10 commandments are not just for God’s chosen people but are His expectations on all mankind.

**You and I are made to worship the living God.**

So, When we have a right relationship with God, we then understand **who we are** and we will have a proper i**dentity, personal significance, sense of security, purpose for living, and constantly find in Him our happiness and joy.**

But when we form for ourselves idols of the heart they we look to our idols to give us give us our i**dentity, personal significance, sense of security, purpose for living, and our happiness.**

This is a super consequential shift in our lives.

One that God takes most seriously and so he blesses us to give us the second commandment.

Look with me again at our catechism question and answer..

**Q46. Why does God give the second commandment: You shall not make for yourself an idol?**

So we will serve, worship, and glorify God and nothing else.

Really do business with the answer with me:

***So we will serve, worship and glorify God and NOTHING ELSE****!*

This is such important clarity especially for us as Christians because we can often be convinced that we good at honoring and obeying the first commandment, ***Do not have any other God’s before me*** and we think that is true of me. I love and worship God! Jesus is my savior and my Lord.

But Christian, let me ask you, **do you serve and worship and glorify God and NOTHING ELSE?**

Another way to evaluate this is, ***are you content in Christ alone?***

**Or are there things that take a hold of you, or cause you to have intense emotional swings, things that when they do not go right they get you very upset or down, things that you can’t stop thinking about, and maybe even things that you are willing to compromise your moral convictions in order to attain or to keep?**

Understand with me that these are the idols that we form in our hearts that keep us **from serving, worshipping and glorifying God alone!!!**

**I want you to really do business with this tonight.**

For all of you who have declared Jesus to be your savior and Lord.

All those who have declared to worship and serve God alone.

Those who love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

**I want you to really think about what that means practically…**

See, God has made it clear that He is to be FIRST in your life.

Far and above everything else that you love and hold dear.

You must understand that God will not share the mantle of your heart with any other things that you might want to put on the same level as Him! If you do then these things or people are Idols!!

Listen to his direct words about this in…

**Isaiah 42:8** I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

**Q46. Why does God give the second commandment: You shall not make for yourself an idol?**

So we will serve, worship, and glorify God and nothing else.

Nothing else can be elevated in your heart and life to be anywhere equal with God.

Pastor Steve mentioned Jesus words in Luke 14 last week and I want to bring us back to it again tonight. Jesus said in…

**Luke 14:26**… “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Now, Jesus is NOT saying to hate your parents or your children.

No, God’s word is clear that we are sacrificially love these people all our days..

What Jesus is highlighting is ***elevation or priority***. He is saying our love and devotion to God is to be so great… so high… that it makes our sacrificial love and true devotion to our family look like hatred by way of comparison.

Let me try to illustrate…

I love the game of baseball. I love sushi. I love riding Harley Davidson motorcycles…

I don’t hate these things.

But I really love my wife and my kids and this church family…

I love you all SO MUCH more that I hate baseball and sushi and riding motorcycles **in comparison.**

Those things do not have any kind of equal affection or attention in my life then my wife, my kids and my church family. If they do then something is fundamentally wrong!

Our Love and devotion for God has to be that much greater than our very favorite people and things in this life. If not.. if we let our love for these things find their way to the highest mantle of our greatest worship and affection if we let them become our source for hope, identity, significance, purpose, or security… then they become idols in our life.

The problem is.. these things are not worthy of our love and devotion like God is alone!!

The other reality you must come to see is that these things will not be faithful to us like God will be alone. They will get sick, they will betray us, they will leave us, they will die

**This is the prophet Samuel’s point when he says..**

“do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. 21 And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty.’ **1 Samuel 12:20-21**

Hosea also chimes in to say that the things you cling to in your life and treat as idols will produce serious consequences that hurt your life but more so hurt your devotion to God. Listen…

**Hosea 8:4** With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction.

When the idol’s you have formed or clung to let you down.. or they break down or run away, you will begin to become undone**!** You will feel crushed. Maybe even like you want to die**- why?**

Because that thing or position or person has become everything to you… ultimate, fundamental, and so when it is away or not working or lost or gone you feel incomplete and undone. What is little and/or temporary is set up on a mantle to be EVERYTHING, to be ultimate.. to be fundamental to us.

Steve said this so well last week, these created things cannot live up to the preasure of being what only God can be to you. That preasure is going to bust open and often when it does it is very consequnctial in our lives!!

Oh, beloved, Brothers and sisters in Christ. This is not an area you can afford to be reactive to…

You must be proactive to take some real inventory and to address these things before the pressure breaks and in reply… YOU BREAK!!!

Remember the definition of an idol.

And idol IS ANYTHING you worship or look to for your hope, identity, significance, purpose, security or joy other than in God, our Creator.

Therefore, **A beloved family member can become an idol because they become more fundamental to your hope, identity, significance, purpose, security or joy life than God.**

When you make a family member (spouse, parent, child the main thing… the most important thing) then what happens when they betray you, leave you, get sick on you or die….. **It will wreck you.**

When you make your career the most important thing.. then what happens when you get fired or have to close up shop because you are out of money or you never get the promotion you think you deserve.. **It wrecks you!!**

When you make your looks the most important thing and then you get older or you get sick or you never get serious about really stewarding your body well and you don’t change.. **then it wrecks you!!**

**If a good thing is lost, you can move on... if an ultimate thing is lost, then you are lost.**

Now some of you are thinking… **But I don’t think my looks or my job or my kids are ULTIMATE.**

But you have to see that for most of us ouridols are not formally declared to be an idol and we have a ceremony committming our self to it as the ultimate thing in our lives… NO.

It is a sneaky, and slow process of forming an idol in your heart. It happens by thinking about it more and more.. .reading or watching things related to it.. studying… practicing.. talking about it.. fixating on it. Giving to many hours to it. And it slowly takes hold of you.. like the Ring took hold of little hobit names Smeagol. And over time it consumed him and became his everything until he turns into Gollum. Then you go mad.. and start talking a formed object… **My precious!**

**So, how we do form or make or fashion for ourselves an idol?**

You give your heart to it… it converts you…. It is all want to do or think about.. It is the lense thorugh which you evaluate all yoru realtionships or interactions… it gives you a sense of identity and purpose to live.

Another consqeunces of idolatry in our lives is… Because the response to losing our idols is so powerfully devastating… we can become overcome with fear for losing it. Instead of hope, you are plagued with fear!

So a level of great unhealth comes to us because of our **fierce fear** **driven motivation** to keep our idols in our possession. This is where addiction for so many takes over. An imbalance in thinking that causes one to over elevate something that isn’t necessarily bad to an unhealthy involvement.

Because we are stricken with fear.. seldom do we really feel true peace!

**Why?**  Because the thing I have elevated to ultimate could be lost or stolen or broken.

Consider how James speaks to this in…

**James 4:2**You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

When our desires and our identity are put on things that do not deliver.. we rebel, we create division, we war, we complain.

You want something so badly that you turn on people to have it.

You can look at every relational struggle you have and underneath all of it is some sort of idol worship.

What this idol is many times in our lives is what we call the **“fear of man”**

**Turn for a brief moment to …. John 12:42-43** Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

In this passage, what we find is man’s deep-seated sinful desire to long for the approval, applause, acceptance, compliments, affection of **other people** rather than from **God.**

We call this **“the fear of man”.** It is something we all struggle with.

**What is the fear of man?**

**Wrong types of concern for what other people think of us. It is a sinful desire for approval and a fear of rejection.**

Understand these are natural human desires… things that God has put in us.

The Bible talks specifically about Christians living a life that is acceptable to others, and what other people think of your character and reputation speaks to the witness you portray about God.

But, i**t is when we have an over desire or wrong-hearted desire or place the opinion of others over that of God when we sin against God.**

**To make it personal for you today/tonight: To see how the fear of man is active in your life:**

**Do you need something from others?** - to fulfill you.

**Do you crave compliments?**

**Do you worry that you might be exposed as an imposter?**

**Are you overly concerned with how you look, how you compare to what others look like, or how you are dressed?**

**Do you think about your self-worth and look to others to shore up how you feel about yourself?**

**Do you often feel unappreciated?**

**Are you quick to make excuses or shift blame so that you do not look like a failure in front of others?**

The fear of man always causes us to set God aside as we want to get another’s approval or into the next inner circle, but it is a failed venture because as soon as we get the praise of another or reach the next inner circle, we discover there is another layer to crave. The problem in this is other people's perceptions of you dominates and controls your life.

**Please understand that this kind of idolatry always leads to slavery.**

The slavery that comes from the idol of the “fear of man” is potent and potentially the most lording kind of slavery as it will dictate what you think, when you should speak, what you should wear, when to laugh, who you are worthy to talk to and even who you should try to be.

Let me remind you of something so very important.. Paul commends the church in Colossae to..

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. **Colossians 3:5**

The phrase “evil desires” here is an effort of the English translators to get across a single Greek word,

which is **Epi- thum-ia.**

**Epithumia =** Is both an evil desire and an over desire- an excessive desire.

It is desiring something evil OR it is an **over or misplaced** desire for what is good.

In this way, it is essentially addiction or lust for something God has made.

*John Calvin clearly says:*

**“The evil in our desire typically does not lie in what we want, but that we want it too much.”**

So often the object of desire is good, and the evil lies in the lordship of the desire.

What this means is that the idols we can cling to can be a very good thing in any other themselves but they have been **inflated to** be the source of our hope, identity, significance, purpose, or security instead of these things being found in God ALONE

**We must EXPOSE our idols because if we don’t they will EXPOSE us.**

See, a created thing will never be able to deliver on an ultimate level like the Creator!

So, when considering the second commandment…

**How do we “not make for yourself an idol”?**

The answer is not to have No affection for the things in creation.

It is that we must have a much greater affection for God.

He must occupy the mantle of our heart alone!

Nothing else gets to be in the place I go to worship. Nothing else gets my greatest affection and devotion. God is my first, my greatest, my everything!!

The other things I love.. the other things I enjoy in this life all are in service to my love and devotion to HIM!!!

I love my wife.. I love my kids… I work hard at my job.. I steward my stuff.. .I eat and drink … for the glory of God!! I love them ,,. I engage them FOR HIM!! BECAUSE I LOVE HIM WAY MORE!!!

And if tonight you are realizing that you have other people or things in your life that you have placed on the mantle of your heart then please understand that the way to correct this is not to love them less… it is to learn to love God way more!!

*Thomas Chalmers once said-* ***“There is not one personal transformation in which the heart is left without an object of ultimate beauty and joy. The heart’s desire for one particular object can be conquered, but it’s desire to have some object is unconquerable. The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one.”***

**🡪You might be able to temporarily remove one idol but your heart still must cast its affections on something….So, you will simply pick up another to fills it’s place.**

**Chalmers is saying here.**

**🡪Idols of the heart cannot be removed.. they can only be replaced.**

**If my children are my Idol.. he is not calling me to love them less he is calling me to love them rightly. The only way I can do that:**

**is to be satisfied in the one thing that can truly satisfied**

**is to be saved by the one and only thing that can save me**

**is to be secured by the one and only person who can keep me secure.**

**Is to be purposed by the only one who can give me eternal purpose. = Jesus!**

**How can we “not make for yourself an idol and or if you have then ..**

**How can we be free from our Idolatry?**

**The Answer is the Difference between two words: Achieve or Receive!**

First Achieve:

You can live your life trying to **achieve** a certain identity, life of significance, level of security, of purpose, of Joy. We can try to achieve those things… it is called SELF SALVATION.

**Who are you… What have you made of yourself. What do you find your identity in?**

As far back as you can remember you have been in Achieve mode trying to answer these ?’s!

Life in our flesh is always “achieve mode”.. “ I have to be more, do more, prove myself”

When you were little Boys you might have sad… Mommy watch how fast I am!

When you are were little girls you might have said, … Daddy, look how beautiful I am!

And then came Days of Our Youth. Jr High and High school became as different kind of proving oneself …often centered around your peer group.

Then as adults we have new cultural pressures we feel with our job, our parenting, etc.

What’s funny is for many adults.. .they never got past the things of their youth so they are still very consumed by how they look or what others think of them.

See with me that this kind of achievement is all centered on some level of finding a sense of identity, or significance, of purpose, of Joy!

Job, friends, love, family, house, car, bank account, recognition/awards.

**It becomes…. “Can I achieved to the point of Self Salvation.”**

Realize this…

--Even the drug addict on the street is in achieve mode to get his next High.

--The Gang Banger who steals or fights or kills does so to achieve acceptance or significance.

All of this is an attempt to rescue yourself from insecurity ..from insignificance by trying to achieve.

HEAR THIS: **As long as you live in achieve mode you will live as a slave!**

All of this is a cling and a pursuit of hope, identity, significance, purpose, joy or security in the things of creation and not in the creator!!

**But there is Good News…..**

**Instead of slaving away at trying to Achieve…. you can Receive! Receive What?**

**RECEIVE the substitutional life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which brings us to an actual Salvation.**

When we turn God ward and receive the Life of Christ.. who stands in your place to achieve all that is needed to **be restored to the Living God who is the absolutely best source of our Identity, personal significance, sense of security, purpose for living, happiness and Joy.**

**To understand that Jesus came and lived Idol Free**.

And yet took upon himself our deserved Wrath for our idol worship and died in our place so that we no longer had to achieve but could be Free to RECEIVE his life in our place.

Which resulted in our restoration in our relationship to the father and opened the doors for us to be satisfied in him forever.

**IN Christ we RECEIVE an identity with God that we could never gain nor can we ever Lose!**

In Achieve mode you can constantly search for Self-salvation through the idols of the heart that never deliver.

OR

In Receive mode we can have Christ Salvation and truly receive from him all that we are trying to find in our counterfeit gods.

Let me be really clear… To Receive Jesus… is not coming to church long enough so you are ok

Or to work hard enough to get your life straight or to rectify the wrongs from your PAST.

All that would just be more Achieving by which you would claim some of the worship and Glory.

**That’s man made Religion.**

**The Gospel is altogether different because Christ achieved what we could not.**

He alone makes us a forever part of the church ..he alone empowers us to walk paths of righteousness that honor him .. he alone heals our wrongs of our past on the Cross.

To receive Jesus is to trust Jesus with our lives. This is how we purge the mantel of our hearts from the over elevation of the idols we have formed. Even the very good things that we have over elevated and or look to in order to try to fulfill us.

Jesus is the only one we worship and life for. He is on the mantle and nothing else.

**Q46. Why does God give the second commandment: You shall not make for yourself an idol?**

So we will serve, worship, and glorify God and nothing else.

**Colossians 3:1**If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2**Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. **3**For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4 When Christ who is your life** appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Only “In Christ who is our life” are we able to look to the good things in our life and see them as good and not have to make them ultimate things.

So your marriage is a good thing but not the ultimate thing.

Your Career is a good thing but not the ultimate thing.

Your Abilities are good but not ultimate.

You realize none of those things can ACHIEVE YOU ULTIMATE JOY and LIFE

🡪Only JESUS could do that!

None of those things could die for you and remain your JOY.

If they were even willing to do that they would be dead and then you would be devastated.

But Christ rose to Victory and sets us on a new path

& **IN HIM alone our Idol Factory can be shut down and put out of business.** AMEN!!!

**Q46. Why does God give the second commandment: You shall not make for yourself an idol?**

So we will serve, worship, and glorify God and nothing else.

**Let’s Pray**