

I and You

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Joshua 24:14-28

Matt 6:24

How sad is that when we treat people like objects or “things”. Each person has a value given by God. Each individual should be treated respectfully.

God personally cares for each one of us. He knows us by name. He knows us even before our birth. God does take care us.

There is an “I-You” relationship.

In the Bible we read this relationship started a long time ago from the beginning of the creation. Our God is a God of relationships. You will hear this statement over and over.

Last week I mentioned the following:

-The Israelites were in Egypt for 400 years. Imagine how they needed a new orientation about **the nature of God (who God is)**, and **how to live Godly lives**. Philip Ryken says: “The Ten Commandments display the character of God. They reveal his sovereignty, jealousy, justice, holiness, honor, faithfulness, providence, truthfulness, and love.”¹

The Ten Words or Commandments express God’s will for our lives, and the beauty of it is based on God's character.

Today we will explore the First Commandment, the First Word:

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³“You shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:2,3 ESV)

I am the Lord YOUR God.

I AM Yahweh, not foreign to you, not unknown to you, I am not an *odar* to you. I AM YOUR GOD.

First things first. Before giving any other commandment, God makes a statement about who He is. This is extremely important.

“Hello guys, this is YOUR GOD talking to you.”

Do you see personal care from God?

Don’t you know me, Nerses? I am YOUR God. I am “Yahweh, the LORD.”

I don’t know of any other religions where God can be so personal with individuals.

And...

“He is the one

who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

Not any god, THE GOD, the one who loves you, and because His love, He rescues, saves, and delivers.

God is specific in explaining what kind of delivery. It was 400 years of slavery that God rescued them from. FOUR HUNDRED years, my brothers and sisters.

This statement “God saved you from slavery” should not be taken as if God is bragging or that we should be in debt to Him because of His wonderful act of salvation. **Keeping the commandments is our response to what He has done in our lives. We can do nothing to gain His love** and His desire to save us.

J.I. Packer says:

“For Christians today, as for the Jews at Sinai, law-keeping (that is, meeting the claims of our God, commandments 1-4, and our neighbor, commandments 5-10) is not an attempt to win God's admiration and put him in our debt, but the form and substance of grateful, personal response to his love.”²

So only after this introduction we can read the first commandment.

In fact, all the commandments we should read starting with the phrase: I AM the LORD, YOUR GOD. Because He is my God I will, I shall....

Let us take the first one:

You shall have no other gods before me.

-When we were kids, we learned to share things. My parents taught me to share my toys with my neighbors. I shared my room with my brother then with my grandmother. Even though sharing a good, yet some things are never meant to be shared. Can you think of something that cannot be shared? Marriage is between husband and wife. That bond is personal and intimate. No one should come between the couple.

God will not share his glory with any other gods.³

The first commandment is fundamental; it lays out the foundation of what is coming next.

In other words, God is saying “I am your Lord God, Yahweh, and since I am your God, I refuse to share my worship with anyone or anything else.”⁴

The Israelites were surrounded with other people and other gods. I just mentioned to you about their 400 years in Egypt.

Let me go to the ten plagues that God brought upon the Egyptians just before He led the Israelites out of Egypt.

“Each of the ten plagues was more than just a dramatic sign to Pharaoh that he must release the Hebrews.”⁵ Each plague was intended to demonstrate who God the I AM is. It was a lesson to Pharaoh and the Israelites as well. Each plague was a symbolic defeat of an Egyptian deity. For example:

- The Nile is the heart of Egypt. **Osiris** is the god of fertility, and the **Nile** is the main source of fertility for the dry lands of Egypt. God Yahweh turned the Nile into blood.
- **Frogs** were sacred for the Egyptians. Thousands of frogs were killed...and so on...
- The 9th plague was **darkness** over Egypt; God was demonstrating his rule over the sun, over **Ra**, the god of sun in Egypt.
- “and in the final plague, the death of the firstborn, God shows himself supreme over the entire Egyptian pantheon by demonstrating his power over life and death.”⁶

God was teaching them that those Egyptian gods are not just false gods, they don't even exist...

Even later in the history of Israel, foreign gods were unfortunately welcomed in their midst.

- The Canaanite and the Phoenician gods: Asherah, Baal...

If you remember the sermon Elijah facing the prophets of Baal and Asherah and king Ahab and queen Jezebel, and the people of Israel.

“How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” (1 King 18:21 ESV)

All those cultures are **polytheistic** in their worship.

Only the God of Israel demanded to be worshipped alone, as the only God. This is fundamental.

There is only one God, who is God over all, and has divine rights over all.

God wanted to make **this statement** engraved in their heart. And why not in our hearts as well.

Unfortunately, until now, we forget who God is....

And we can turn to other “gods”, whoever and whatever they are.

Jesus also said that we should have allegiance ONLY to God. He said we cannot serve two masters... (Matt 6:24)

When God is demanding to reject **false gods**. He is asking us to **choose the true God**.

Calvin said:

“The first commandment requires us ‘to contemplate, fear and worship His majesty; to participate in his blessings; to seek his help at all times; to recognize, and by praises to celebrate, the greatness of his work-- as the only goal of all the activities of life.’”⁷

No wonder Jesus summarized the law in saying: **love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind**. (Matthew 22:37 ESV)

Love is the right word when it comes to this first commandment. God is making a covenant with us, with humanity, and this covenant is a covenant of LOVE.

I AM YOUR God Yahweh *Adoni*, LORD

You shall have no other gods before me.

I am...

You shall....

I am (personal)...You shall (personal)before me(personal)

I and You.

I AM your Lord, Your God, Your Daddy... You are my child and I want you to love me, personally, no one else... no one else...

What happens when we neglect this First Commandment?

Just think about King Solomon. He started well. He asked God wisdom.... God granted him wisdom and wealth....

How could a man who was so wise be so stupid!

Gradually, he opened his door to foreign wives and their gods....

He lost it. He drifted when he started to worship other gods... It was a catastrophe...

All that wealth, power, fame, meant nothing. Then the tragedy Israel dividing into two kingdoms, and the tragedy of Solomon seeing life as most meaningless.

Vanity of vanities...

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It can happen to us today.

Application, Test yourself:

- Who do you love?
- What is the desire of your heart?
- Who do you trust?

- Do you have another god or gods beside God?

"You shall have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3)

"I am your Lord God, Yahweh, and since I am your God, I refuse to share my worship with anyone or anything else."⁴

Another translation the phrase **"before me"** is **"beside me, in addition to me."** In Hebrew the word is *Aal*, and can mean different things.

Perhaps you worship God, and you have another "god" or "gods" in addition to Him.

God and money, God and wife, God and children, God and work, God and your car, God and health, God and fame, God andwhat is it?

Those "gods" are positive things. Watch out so that you will not add another god to our only God.

Let finish by a quote by The Puritan Matthew Henry:

"Pride makes a god of self, covetousness makes a god of money, sensuality makes a god of the belly; whatever is esteemed or loved, feared or served, delighted in or depended on, more than God, that (whatever it is) we do in effect make a god of."⁸

For the sake of my servant Jacob,
and Israel my chosen,

I call you by your name,

I name you, though you do not know me.

⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other,
besides me there is no God;

I equip you, though you do not know me,

⁶ that people may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is none besides me;

I am the LORD, and there is no other.

⁷ I form light and create darkness;

I make well-being and create calamity;

I am the LORD, who does all these things. (Isaiah 45:3-7 ESV)

Here is my prayer:

Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;

listen to my plea for grace.

⁷ In the day of my trouble I call upon you,
for you answer me.

⁸ There is none like you among the gods, O Lord,
nor are there any works like yours.

⁹ All the nations you have made shall come
and worship before you, O Lord,
and shall glorify your name.

¹⁰ For you are great and do wondrous things;
you alone are God.

Teach me your way, O LORD,
that I may walk in your truth;
unite my heart to fear your name.

¹² I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name forever. (Psalm 86:6-12 ESV)

Amen

1. Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in the Stone*, p17
2. J.I. Packer, *Keeping the 10 Commandments*, p31
3. Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in the Stone*, p57
4. *ibid* p 58
5. Jen Wilkin, *Ten Words to Live By*, p 23
6. *ibid*. P 23
7. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, from the book *Written in the Stones*, P 61
8. Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in the Stone*, p67