

If we could keep the first commandment, we'd keep the rest automatically. How? If we really did believe, love, and trust in God above all else, every other instruction from God would fall into place.

What is a "god" anyway? A god is that upon which we rely for all needs, that which we seek for comfort and solace, security, hope for the future, in which we place full trust and confidence. To us, the LORD says of himself, *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³ You shall have no other gods before me."* (**Exodus 20:2-3**) Being the source of deliverance and everything else, the I AM WHO I AM then says his people aren't to make an idol from anything nor shall we turn anything into an idol.

Don't we make idols all the time though, as a matter of habit, and let them take God's place? I don't imagine you have actual statues of idols your house in a shrine you worship or pray to. There are things you worship, though, that aren't the true God with the result that the rest of the commandments prove impossible to keep, because if we don't address and put them away, we constantly start off on the wrong foot. We're all guilty of this. We must identify our idols and stop worshipping them, exactly like God said, *"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God."* (**Exodus 20:4-5a**) Idols can be and so regularly are: kids/family, sports (both those you do and spectate), work/career, physical fitness or the pursuit of leisure, a substance and finding escape in it, phones and the content we consume and create through them, this country or a political party and its platform, yourself. How sad, truly so, that we let these things take the place of the living God who saves us, who loves us, who listens to and answers our prayers. These things can't! But in our ravenous pursuit of them, sometimes at the expense of almost everything else in our lives, we display by what we do our belief and hope that our idols can.

God delivers. God delivers us from sin. God delivers in every other way. That's the first thing he said to Israel when giving them these commandments, "I saved you by bringing you out of the land of slavery. I am the LORD of promise, I am your mighty God. Because I am this and because I have mercifully delivered you, you do these things as my people, and you will be blessed by doing them." By graciously delivering them, God gave them all the reason required to do what he said. Holds true for us, yes? Yes! So worship the Lord your God and serve him only. How? First, by recognizing him for who he is: his power, his supreme excellence, by relying on his love and saving grace for the forgiveness of your sins, by believing in Jesus who is your perfection, your substitute, who lived for you, who poured out his blood and gave his life on a cross for you. This is the price of our failure to be holy. This is the price of our deliverance from slavery to sin and its wage of death.

God has redeemed you. Praise God's name and give him the glory he deserves! Praise him for his mighty acts of saving power and his surpassing greatness! God's Word gives us so many beautiful words of praise to echo. **Psalm 96:2, 8a**, "*Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.*" ⁸ *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name.*" **Revelation 5:12**, "*Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!*" God gives us the work of his Son through faith! **Romans 3:25**, "*God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith.*" The death of Jesus and what it means for our praise of God, not just with words but with our lives, is explained so well in **Galatians 2:20**, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*"

You praise and worship God with your mind, your heart, your hands, your whole self by offering yourself to God as a living sacrifice. You are able to never stop worshipping God by the manner in which you live. Living by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave himself up for you looks like this: doing what God says in love. Jesus said in **Matthew 22:37-39**, " *Love the Lord your God with all your*

*heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’*³⁸ *This is the first and greatest commandment.*³⁹ *And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’* ” Love glorifies and worships God with all you have and are. Love honors your neighbor as yourself and keeps the commands God’s given about them.

In this endeavor, the Law, these Ten Commandments, are not your master, but your servant, your guide. Do these things, not because the law rules over you, it doesn’t, but because God has set your heart free and running in the path of his commands, doing the things he loves, is how you communicate the great love and thanks you have for him. This is also how you communicate love for others. In the vast majority of our interactions, we’re presented with opportunities to worship God by how we deal with others, so that’s how seven of the Ten Commandments are focused.

First, have no other gods, love, trust, and rely on the one true Lord for everything, especially deliverance from sin. **Second**: Never attach God’s name to sinful aims, he won’t hold anyone guiltless who does this. Use God’s name to pray, praise, to call upon for blessing for yourself, loved ones, and perfect strangers. **Third**: Take time to rest in God’s Word, to hear the gospel which gives peace by assuring you of salvation in Jesus. **Fourth**: Honor those in positions authority and if you’re in authority, do your level best to be worthy of honor never assuming you are and never insisting upon its reception. **Fifth**: Love life, keeping hateful thoughts far from your heart since haters are murderers. Do what you can to care for human life, before and after people are born, and leave the, “are they worthy of my care?” question out of your thinking. They aren’t worthy, neither are you, yet God’s merciful to you so you are to be merciful to others and give them care. **Sixth**: Be pure without even a hint of sexual immorality being present in thought, word, or action. Why? God tells you to and you’re his temple, so don’t attach him to sexual sin. Keeping this commandment avoids major guilt which can last a lifetime. **Seventh**: Don’t simply not steal, but don’t deceive people in practice or fine print; help them keep on having and improving what’s theirs. **Eighth**: Be honest in your relationships and communications, take words and actions in the kindest way possible, defend others, flee gossip, say only what’s useful for building others

up according to their needs so it benefits those who listen. **Ninth** and **Tenth**: Keep sinful desires in check, eliminate them. Be content with what God's given finding the ability in Jesus' strength which is at work so powerfully in you.

In general, worship the Lord your God by believing in Jesus as your savior from sin, by carrying each other's burdens, by looking after the most vulnerable in their distress, this is religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless. We fail, but God always remains true to his nature and shows forgiving love 1000 times over because where sin increased, God's grace in Jesus increased all the more. Amen.