

The Greatest Command

A lawyer once approached Jesus in the temple with a difficult test question (Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34). He asked Jesus what was the greatest of all the Old Testament commands. He wanted to see if Jesus would side with one particular religious group or if Jesus would pick one particular Old Testament command over the other 600+ commands?

When Jesus responded, he said the command to love God was the greatest (Deuteronomy 6:5) and the command to love your neighbor was second (Leviticus 19:18). Jesus responded this way because loving God and loving your neighbor was the foundation of all the Old law. Now, while we are no longer under the Old law, these two commands are still binding upon Christians today and we must learn what they mean and apply them in our life. If we get the foundation right, then the rest of the structure (our life) will be right.

Jesus said we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. This means with our whole being – emotionally, intellectually, and physically. We are not to compartmentalize our life and love God only at certain times and in certain ways. Let us all grow in properly loving God with our whole being (2 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 John 2:5; Jude 21).

Jesus also said that we are to love our neighbor as our self. This is like the “golden rule”: treat others the way you would want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). We are not to treat others worse than we would treat our own selves. Let us all grow in properly loving our neighbor as our self (Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). Love God. Love your neighbor. Following these great commands will make us a great person. - *Chris Reeves*

Sentence Sermons

- Try to remember the kindness of others and try to forget your own.
- The Christian can actually see life a lot better while on his knees in prayer.
- Some people preach by the bushel and practice by the pint.
- Many people give after they are asked, but true Christians give before they are asked.
- Often when people talk too much it's because they think too little.

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

American Idol(s): Examining the False gods We Serve

Religions like Hinduism and Buddhism worship many false gods and idols as a part of their belief and practice. Hindus, for example, worship Krishna their supreme being and 33 million other gods at the same time. Yes, you read that right, 33 million!

There have been times when God's people tried to serve God and idols at the same time (2 Kings 17:33,41; Zephaniah 1:5). This never worked well for the people and God was never pleased with it. Serving false gods always brings sorrow (Psalm 16:4) and God's people should never try to carry false gods around with them in their lives (Amos 5:26).

What is idolatry? By definition, idolatry is "1. worship of idols. 2. excessive admiration of, devotion to, or reverence for some person or thing" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 722). The second definition above is especially important for our study here. We may not be idolatrous in the sense of literally bowing down to a piece of wood or stone. But, we can certainly be idolatrous with our excessive admiration of, or devotion to, persons or things.

Idols can be outward objects made

of wood or stone (Exodus 20:2-5; Isaiah 44:9-20; Jeremiah 10:1-5; Acts 17:16; Romans 1:23; Revelation 9:20). But, idols can also be inward objects of desire within the heart (Ezekiel 14:1-5). What are the idols that many Americans have in their hearts? What do they idolize? Let's examine a few.

First, many Americans bow to the god of materialism. They love "mammon" (riches) more than God



(Matthew 6:21,24,33) and they covet many things which is idolatry (Colossian 3:5). Their jobs, money, possessions, cars, iPhones, clothes, alcohol, drugs, food, etc., are their idols.

Second, many American bow to the god of this world. They serve the devil and not God (2 Corinthians 4:4). They have the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15).

Third, many Americans bow to the god of self (Romans 16:18; Philippians 3:19; 2 Tim. 3:2). Their education, achievements, physical body, etc., are their idols.

Fourth, many Americans bow to the god of pleasure and entertainment. The pleasures of this life rule over them (Luke 8:14; 2 Timothy 3:4; James 4:1). Their hobbies, sports, movies, music, etc., are their idols.

How can we know if we are truly an idolater or not? Here are a few questions we can honestly ask and answer for ourselves. Do we use these things as tools to get through life or as masters to serve (1 Timothy 6:6-10)? Do we choose one of these things over proper service to the Lord (Matthew 19:20-22)? Do we share what we have or hoard it and hope in it (Luke 12:13-21; 1 Timothy 6:17-19).

In closing, I will leave you with a few biblical admonitions concerning idols: "Make no mention ... of other gods" (Exodus 23:13; 34:14). "Neither be idolaters ... flee idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:7,14). "Turn unto God from idols" (1 Thessalonians 1:9). "Guard yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

- Chris Reeves -