

The First Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 19 January 2015 13:27

I

You shall have no other gods before me.

Exodus 20:3, NIV

Introduction

The First Commandment can be translated, "You shall have no other gods besides [in addition to] me." Anything that begins to compete with God for first place in our lives becomes an idol or substitute for God. We are the ones who will suffer if God is dethroned in our hearts. I will demonstrate this later in this writing.

In investigating any philosophy or religion, find out who the god is! For example, YAHWEH is the God of both Jews and Christians. Marxists deny the existence of God and substitute mankind for God. Secular humanists also make mankind their god.

Substitutes for God

Self

When Satan tempted Eve, he said,

"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:5, NIV

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There is a basic rebellion in human hearts. We do not want anyone telling us what to do. We want to be our own "god." Actually, all substitutes for God boil down to our being our own god. Another person can be our god—this is really an extension of our own ego. Likewise, our ego can be extended to all mankind—this is secular humanism.

Satan

Rebellion against God can take the form of aligning ourselves with Satan himself. Satan worship is coming out of the closet in the United States.

Satan fell and drew one third of the other angels with him in his rebellion against God. People align themselves with Satan when they become involved with demons. Demons are spirits who are under the command of Satan. Some forms of demon worship are animism, polytheism, henotheism, witchcraft, cults, occultism, and Baal worship.

In addition, demons can directly control people who do not receive Christ as Lord and Savior. They cause physical illness and mental illness. They may be involved in sexual malconditioning and immorality—they are called *unclean spirits* in the New Testament. Control may start with influence and end up in possession, where the evil spirit is in control of the human spirit. Jesus and the Apostles cast out demons and Jesus commanded believers to cast out demons and gave them authority to do so.

Things

We can attempt to replace God with things.

Money can be a substitute for God. Jesus taught,

"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Matthew

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6:24, NIV

God wants to bless us financially. However, we must master money and not let money master us. Money is a good servant but a destructive master. We must have only one master: our Heavenly Father. If wealth is our god, our god could perish if we become bankrupt! If Almighty God is our source, then he will supply all our needs. Believe the Bible. Trusting in the dollar shows a lack of faith in God!

Power—the drive to control others. We may be driven by power. Nietzsche postulated that man is motivated by *the will to power*. If power over others is our god, it will destroy social relationships around us. It fosters *party spirit*, and Paul warned the Corinthian Church against it. If we make power our god, we may find our lives devoid of love.

Fame is a weak god and doesn't satisfy the inward longing of the heart. Marilyn Monroe and Ernest Hemmingway illustrate this tragically. They both achieved fame and both experienced the American dream, yet they were both unfulfilled.

Education and *culture* are pathetic gods. Scientific knowledge is in perpetual flux—there is nothing solid there. The longing for culture and to be accepted by others is a poor substitute for being accepted by God. We should seek *relative knowledge*, but it is secondary to *absolute knowledge*—the knowledge of the Bible. We should live in harmony with others, but both *education* and *culture* are cheap substitutes for God.

Success is a destroying god. Workaholic fathers who are driven to succeed often fail to raise successful children. Today, feminists and money-hungry government push mothers to succeed in the marketplace. Women are confused, overworked and guilt-ridden. Undisciplined and maladjusted children result.

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God loves us unconditionally. He seeks the best for us and knows what is best for us. After all, he designed and created us. He is *omnipotent* (all powerful) and *omniscient* (all wise and possesses all knowledge. His love, infinite knowledge, wisdom and power is a winning combination for us. It just makes sense to give him our allegiance. It is the only right and wise thing to do!

Serve God

Choose God

The first step towards home is to choose to go to *YAHWEH* our Creator. He must be our only God and Father!

Obey God

It is important to study the Bible, God's Holy Word. God's reveals his will and plan for our lives in the Bible. Also, the Holy Spirit will guide us. The Holy Spirit will always guide us in line with the Bible, since he inspired it.

Love God

Jesus taught us to love God supremely:

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him,. "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

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"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

Mark 12:28-31, NIV

To illustrate what it means to love God supremely, let us look an incident in the life of the beloved Abraham.

Supreme Test

The story of Abraham's supreme test is found in Genesis 22:1-18.

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

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"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and the wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place [YAHWEH-YIREH] The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Genesis 22:1-18, NIV)

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Before we investigate this story, it is important to review the events leading up to it.

Abraham left the city of Haran when he was seventy-five years old, in obedience to the LORD. God promised him a son. His name was Abram then. The word, "Abram," means *Exalted Father* :

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.
Genesis 12:1-4, NIV

Later on, God restated his promise to Abram:

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield,your very great reward."

But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."

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Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:1-6, NIV

Every time someone called Abram by name, he heard, "Hey, Exalted Father!" (The word "Abram" in Hebrew means *Exalted Father*.) It must have sounded sarcastic to Abram, who was not a father. And in those days, it was heart-breaking not to have children. Children then were counted a blessing. Today, some count children as a liability and an inconvenience!

Then, when Abraham reached ninety-nine years, God restated his promise to him. God also changed his name from Abram (*Exalted Father*) to Abraham (Abraham in Hebrew means *Father of a Multitude*

). God called his friend Abraham, the

Father of a Multitude

, when Abraham and Sarah were sterile:

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty (*El Shaddai*); walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

Genesis 17:1-5, NIV

God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai (*my princess*) your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah (*princess*). I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.

Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety? And Abraham said to God, "If only

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Ishmael (*God will hear*) might live under your blessing!"

Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac (*he laughs*

). I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendents after him. And as for Israel, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year."

Genesis 17: 15-21, NIV

When God told Abraham and Sarah that they were going to have a son, both of them laughed. Abraham was an old man and Sarah had already passed through menopause. God said they were to call their son Isaac after he was born!

Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have born him a son in his old age."

Genesis 21:1-7, NIV

Abraham laughed, Sarah laughed, everyone laughed for joy that their son, *He Laughs*, was born!

Now, let us return to the wonderful story in Genesis 22.

Abraham had believed God for twenty-five years for his son Isaac. Now, God appeared to

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Abraham and told him to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering to him.

What is going on in Abraham's mind? We are not told what he was thinking, but we can approximate it by what he said and by what local customs were.

The Canaanites practiced human sacrifice at the time. Human sacrifice was an abomination to the LORD:

Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.
(Leviticus 18:21, NIV)

He [good King Josiah] desecrated Topheth which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech.
(2 Kings 23:10, NIV)

"The people of Judah have done evil in my eyes, declares the LORD. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears my Name and have defiled it. They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind.' "
(Jeremiah 7:30-31, NIV)

It is very interesting to note that Jesus used Gehenna as a symbol of everlasting torment. The word Gehenna is a transliteration of the Greek word *Geenna*, which is a transliteration of the two Hebrew words, *Ge Hinnom* (Valley of Hinnom or Topheth), located immediately south of Jerusalem. At one time, ancient Jews sacrificed infants to the false god Molech. The idol Molech was destroyed, the practice of infant sacrifice was stopped and the area was made into a garbage dump. It was not a sanitary landfill like we have today. Bodies of humans and animals, plus filth were dumped there. Because of the rotting material, perpetual fires were kept going. Thus Jesus words, "where their worm [maggots] dieth not and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44, 46, 48, KJV) Jesus made this statement three times! Thus, both the Jewish and Christian scriptures condemn infant sacrifice.

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We of the twentieth century, in our sophistication, would not build a hollow bronze idol (Molech) and roast infants alive in the idol's arms! But we have sacrificed 57,000,000 innocent, helpless human beings on the altar of selfishness. We have sacrificed countless newborn babies on that same altar! We have sacrificed the old and handicapped on that identical altar! God is not pleased with this premeditated murder, my friends.

Back to Abraham: Abraham had about twenty and a half hours to think as he traveled from Beersheba to Jerusalem. He loved his son. Yet, he knew the promises of God for his son Isaac.

They arrived at their destination and Abraham told his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." Abraham fully intended to sacrifice his son, and yet he told his servants that both he and his son would return. Was Abraham lying? The writer of the book of Hebrews says not:

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Hebrews 11:17-19, NIV

Isaac asked his dad, "We have the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Paraphrased).

Abraham answered, "God will provide the lamb, son" (Paraphrased).

Isaac walked alongside his dad, trusting him.

When Abraham and Isaac reached the spot God told him about, Abraham built an altar. He arranged the wood, then tied up Isaac and laid him on the wood. (Now, Abraham loved Isaac. Everything was bound up in his son—Abraham's future, his dreams, all the promises of God).

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Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son.

At the last second, an angel called out to Abraham and stopped him from killing his son. As I wrote these words, the tears began to flow. I have a son, John Jr., and Mary a daughter. If you have a son or daughter, you can also empathize with Abraham. God doesn't want us to kill our children, or to maim or mutilate ourselves. He wants our whole allegiance just as he wanted Abraham's complete allegiance.

Had Isaac began to compete with God for first place in Abraham's heart? Any idolatry that may have been in the heart of Abraham was now purged:

"Lay down the knife; don't hurt the lad in any way," the Angel said, "for I know that God is first in your life—you have not withheld even your beloved son from me."
Genesis 22:12, The Living Bible

However, God did not stop the sacrifice of another son later in history. That Son was his very own. God gave Abraham an experience like he himself would have later:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
John 3:16, KJV

As God provided a lamb sacrifice to replace Isaac, so he provided his Son—the Lamb of God—as a sacrifice for our salvation.

God had revealed himself to Abraham as *YAHWEH-YIREH*, literally, "The LORD Sees," which means that God sees our needs and since he loves us, he provides those needs.

YAHWEW-YIREH

is translated "The LORD Will Provide" in Genesis 22:14. Abraham named that place after this particular name of God.

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Because Abraham was obedient to God, God continued to reveal himself to Abraham, step-by-step. Jesus said,

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.
John 14:21, NIV

Because Abraham was completely dedicated to the LORD, God was able to make him a blessing to the world:

1. He became the father of all Jews.
2. He became the spiritual father of all believers:

And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised [the Jews] who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

.....
Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.
Romans 4:11-13, 16, NIV

3. He became the ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament begins with these words,

A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:
Matthew 1:1, NIV

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Abraham had a special relationship with God. We can also have a personal relationship with God through Christ.

Conclusion

A fitting conclusion for so great a story is to receive Christ as your Savior if you have not done so. Here is how to receive the Lord as your Savior:

How to Become a Christian

It is easy to become a Christian. Jesus has already done the hard part by dying on the cross for us. Here are six very important truths:

1. God loves you.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 3:16-17, NIV

2. Because of sin, we are under God's judgment:☐

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

John 3:18, NIV

3. We cannot be made right with God by good deeds:

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For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:8-10, NIV

4. Only God can make us right with himself, based on Jesus' death on the cross.□

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

Romans 8:33, NIV

5. Our part is to believe in Christ and confess Him as our Lord:

But what does it say? The Word (God's message in Christ) is near you, on your lips and in your heart; that is, the Word (the message, the basis and object) of faith which we preach,

Because if you acknowledge {and} confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and in your heart believe (adhere to, trust in, and rely on the truth) that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart a person believes (adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Christ) and so is justified (declared righteous, acceptable to God), and with the mouth he confesses (declares openly and speaks out freely his faith) {and} confirms [his] salvation.

The Scripture says, No man who believes in Him [who adheres to, relies on, and trusts in Him] will [ever] be put to shame {or} be disappointed.

Romans 10:8-11, AMP

6. The Holy Spirit will give your spirit a new birth.

This is the most important experience that you will ever have. God will set you free and he will bring new life into your being. This new life will make you more like the Lord Jesus. Jesus said,

"You should not be surprised at my saying, "you must be born again."

John 3:7, NIV

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Tell others that you have accepted Christ as your Savior. Please email me and tell me the good news also.

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