

February 10/11, 2024

## **To Be God's People is to Be Godly People**

*Exodus: The God Who is With Series*

Exodus 20:1-7

Pastor Jeff Petersen

When you were growing up, who did you most admire? Either somebody that you knew personally, or maybe you had a hero that you just admired from afar? Well, I am going to guess that who they were, and how they acted, influenced you. In my generation, countless guys began sticking out their tongue while they were playing basketball and began trying to leap from the free throw line to make a hoop over and over in vain and wearing Air Jordans. Why? Because everybody wanted to, 'Be like Mike'. Perhaps for you, it was someone or something completely different. But I would guess that most of us have been influenced in our lives by greatness, or at least perceived greatness. And whatever or whomever it was that we would admire, I am quite sure that was what we would seek to emulate. And it kind of underscores the need to be sure that we are setting the bar high enough, doesn't it? After all, shouldn't we be seeking to become like the greatest One there is? Well, in our text, today, we are going to get another glimpse of the One who is greater than all others, of His character, and of His plan for His people. So, if you have your Bibles with you this morning, would you open with me to Exodus Chapter 20. Last week, Ryan led us through Exodus 19 and the incredible scene that set the stage for what was about to happen in Exodus 20. And then in Exodus 20, right in verse 1, we read:

**Then God spoke all these words, saying...** (\*NASB, Exodus 20:1)

You see, this is what is called the Sinai Theophany. A theophany is a visible manifestation of the presence of God. And since God is about to speak to His people, in chapter 19 we see that there was a preparation for this. In fact, we read in verses 10 through 13, it was a three-day preparation of cleansing, preparing, and setting of boundaries. Then in chapter 19, in verses 16 and 18, we read that there began to be thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud descending, and a loud trumpet, and smoke and fire, and a violent earthquake shaking the entire mountain. And then God spoke. This is the context in which God spoke audibly to His people in verse 1: **Then God spoke all these words**. Numerous times in the Old Testament, they will reflect back on this incident. And every single time, it is noted that God spoke directly to His people and all the people heard from God. And how did they respond to hearing the voice of God? Well, we're actually going to dig into that next week. But for now, let's begin unpacking what it was that God had to say. Verse 2:

**I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.**

Here in Exodus 20, we find what is called the Decalogue, or the ten words of God. Now, we most commonly refer to it as the Ten Commandments, but, interestingly, that is not how the text presents these words from God. Moses is going to reiterate these in Deuteronomy 5. And just before he does, in Deuteronomy 4 verses 12 through 13, he says:

**Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire;...So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, *that is, the* (ten words, which our English Bible translates) **Ten Commandments**;** (Deuteronomy 4:12-13)

And so the key to understanding what was happening is what Moses called these words. He called them **His covenant**. While these words are stated in an imperative form, which is why they are called the Ten Commandments, the intent is God revealing the terms of the covenant relationship He is making with Israel, who is His chosen firstborn son whom He redeemed and claimed when the firstborn of Egypt died in the tenth strike. So this is covenant language.

Now, in the ancient Near East, a covenant would have a *preamble* and a *prologue*. That's what we find in verse 2. The preamble identifies the parties to the agreements. The prologue then explains how they came to be related to one another. The preamble, **I am the LORD your God**, once again reminds them and introduces Himself with His name I am—I AM Who I AM—and He says, “I am God.” The first and primary party to this covenant is Yahweh, the eternally existent God. And then He says, **I am the LORD your God**. He is speaking to, addressing the people of Israel, the Hebrews, and these are the parties of this covenant relationship that is being made together. That's the *preamble*.

Then the *prologue*: **who brought you out of the land of Egypt**. You see, this relationship began with a promise from God that was all the way back in Genesis 12 and 15, to Abraham. But in Exodus 3:8, in our study, we read that God came down and said, “*I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt, and I have come down to deliver them from Egypt and to take them in to a promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey.*” What is the relationship of these people? How did they come to be related? It is because God came near. God called them. God chose them. And He says, “Not only did I bring you out of Egypt,” He says, “Also, **out of the house of slavery.**” All fall we studied, *The God who Delivers*, and that is exactly what He has done. Please note these words, these commands, are not just given in a vacuum; they are given in a context. It is a context of relationship with a good God who has already shown to the Israelite people just how good He is. They have seen God's power; they have experienced God's protection. They have also enjoyed the blessing of God's miraculous provision. And now they are in God's very presence, to hear His voice as He instructs His chosen people and delivers His people on what it means to be a chosen people...to be His people living in covenant relationship with Him.

You know, if you ask people, “What do you know from the book of Exodus?” almost always people will talk about the 10 plagues, the 10 strikes on Egypt. Or maybe they'll talk about the crossing of the sea or some other action scene. But it is actually Sinai which is the pinnacle of the book. This is what all of those things have been pointing toward—chapter 20 is right in the middle of the 40 chapters—and this is the literary high point! This is where God is going to enter into a covenant relationship with His people. So, in verse 2 is a *preamble* and a *prologue*, and then comes the *promise*—the terms of the covenant.

This covenant requires a little explanation for us to understand in our modern context. Such a covenant is sometimes called a *hesed* relationship. You see, in this time and context, the people in the ancient Near East believed with much reason that if Person A had voluntarily rescued Person B, then Person B had a true and moral and lasting obligation to Person A. And such a claim is sometimes called a *hesed* relationship. Here, out of God's mercy, out of His lovingkindness, which

in Hebrew is *hesed*, comes a covenant relationship between God and the people He has chosen and delivered. The Ten Words then outline what this covenant relationship means and what can be expected for and from the parties to the covenant. And the Ten Words are expressed as moral imperatives because they reveal God's nature, God's character. They show what God is like and what it means then, in turn, to be like God as God's chosen people. And they begin exactly as they should begin in verse 3:

**You shall have no other gods before Me.** (Exodus 20:3)

This is the starting place for the entire covenant relationship. Yahweh, the God who delivered, protected and provided for Israel and who is with Israel. Yahweh is to be Israel's God, having first place in the life of the community. And think of the context that Israel was in. For generations, Israel has lived in the polytheism of Egypt, watching, perhaps even imitating the idolatrous practices of Egypt. And now God has shown both them and the Egyptians that Yahweh is the one true God and He has taken them from Egypt and He is going to take them to a promised land which is now filled with polytheistic idol-worshipping peoples. So here in this liminal space, as Ryan called it, this in-between place between Egypt and the Promised Land, God is seeking to form this community. And the first word of what it means to be this community is to be Yahweh's people, wholly, entirely, exclusively devoted to Him, and Him alone as God.

In verse 3, **you shall have no other gods before Me**, the literal essence of the Hebrew translated **before Me** is *at, to, before the face*. You could even say *to my face*. One commentator likened the imagery to a husband taking another woman and bringing her into his home right in the face of his wife. Unfortunately, in the future, Israel will become an idolatrous nation, and, repeatedly in Scripture, the LORD will refer to their idolatry as adultery. It is unfaithfulness to Yahweh and to His covenant relationship with them. Such imagery even extends to the New Testament where Christ is called the bridegroom and the church is called His bride, and we are called to be a faithful bride of Christ. The foundation of this covenant relationship is faithfulness, exclusive faithfulness, devotion to the worship of Yahweh alone.

I personally know a man who was married, but he became attracted to another woman, and he had an affair, and he was caught. Now typically, when something like that happens, the man will end the affair, or unfortunately sometimes end the marriage. But this guy had a different idea. He said to his wife, "Why do we have to live by the rules that other people create? I want you both. Why can't she just come and live with us and the three of us can all do this together?" Well, his wife, rightly and vehemently rejected his idea. She would not share the marriage relationship, nor should she be asked to do so. And when God saves His people, He calls them to faithful, exclusive worship and devotion to Him and Him alone. He will not share His glory and He will not ignore the folly of adulterous idolatry right in His face. God knew the temptation that would come to Israel in this fallen and idolatrous world. Thus, He speaks a second word intended to protect the people that He loves. Verse 4:

**You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.**

Commentators debate if this is intended to keep Israel from the worship of other gods, which was just forbidden in the first command, or to not make images in the likeness of Yahweh Himself. I believe that both perspectives have validity. First, any attempt to make a physical icon representing the great I AM is foolhardy. What could man possibly make that would capture the essence of the God who is speaking to Israel in this moment? Think about what Israel has already learned. They learned His name—I AM WHO I AM. He is the eternally, preexistent, self-sufficient, almighty God. What icon could possibly represent Him? They've learned of His protection. They've learned of His power, of His deliverance, of His provision, and, again, what image could possibly capture His essence and His greatness? And think of the moment they are in right now. Smoke, fire, thunder, lightning—an entire mountain shaking—and now a voice proclaiming His covenant. How could they possibly create any sort of idol that would not diminish His glory? God is God. Yahweh is infinitely greater than any idolatrous depiction could ever be. But again, recognizing their larger context and the dangerous potential snare which polytheistic idolatry represents for them, God prohibits in verse 4 making an idol **of any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth**. Why? Because people are made to worship, and we were made to worship Yahweh. But we are prone to worshipping much lesser things.

Over the decades, I have traveled and served in Asia so many times. And so many times I have literally been overwhelmed by the staggering idolatry and their destructive consequences. I have stood in a temple in China, watching people bow down to a statue, shaking little tubes of sticks and praying to this statue. And then when one of the sticks fell out, believing that somehow that god had given them the answer they needed for their life. I have watched in India, as people have bowed down to gods made of stone and wood, sometimes in the most desperate circumstances of life, seeking help, seeking answers, receiving nothing but silence in return. Perhaps the greatest explanation of the fool hearty nature of idolatry is found right here in Scripture itself. Later when Israel becomes this idolatrous nation, Isaiah will speak against it. Read chapter 44 sometime this week. In that chapter, Isaiah says a man takes a piece of wood from a tree, and he cuts it in two. And with one half, he lights a fire. He warms himself, and he cooks his dinner. And with the other half he fashions a god, and He bows down to it. What could make less sense? Man cannot create a god.

Unless we think that idolatry is only a problem on the other side of the world or back in time, let us not forget that this room is filled with people who are tempted and have a propensity to worship things created by the hands of man. Out of His love for His chosen people, God seeks to protect them by forbidding them to make or have an idol or image. And He reminds them of His relationship to them as He commands them not to worship idols. Verse 5:

**You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God...**

**A jealous God.** In our modern understanding, the word **jealous** almost always carries with it a negative connotation. We think of a person who is jealous as a person who is inherently insecure, controlling, suspicious, maybe even paranoid, sometimes even perhaps threatening or violent. That is not at all what it means here. Think of it this way. If your child went out in the street risking their very life, you would be zealous to protect them. This is the essence of what God's jealous nature means toward His chosen people. He is zealous to protect them and to protect His

relationship with them. Think of the illustration that I shared earlier. That wife was jealous for her husband, and there is a righteous jealousy—a protection of the sanctity of a covenant relationship and of one's own honor. For that wife to have been indifferent, rather than jealous, would have met becoming a party to defiling their covenant relationship. And it would have also been degrading to the very dignity, honor, and personhood of that woman. Well, God's holiness, God's honor, and God's covenant relationship, demand that He be jealous for His people. He will not be defiled by idolatry, by spiritual adultery, by His people worshipping false gods right in His face. And those who choose such a path will reap the consequences of what they have sown. Continuing then in verse 5:

**...visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me...**

Now to hate Him in this context, is to show contempt for who He is and for all that He has done for His people by forsaking Him and shamefully engaging in adultery right in His face. But what about this idea of visiting iniquity on generations? First, let's talk about what it does not mean. God does not punish sons for the sins of their fathers. That is explicitly stated to this covenant people in Deuteronomy 24:16. Often this often-repeated command and this often-repeated consequence is talking about the consequences which will come to successive generations who commit the same sins as their parents, because that is what they learned from the pattern of their parents. Choices have consequences, and to understand what verse 5 means, all we have to do is look to the future of Israel itself. Israel will become this idolatrous nation.

It is actually David's son, Solomon, who loved foreign women, who began to bring idolatry into Israel. And as a result, God says, "I am going to tear the kingdom in two, and I will take the vast majority of the kingdom and give it to someone else. And only one tribe, the tribe of Judah, will remain with Solomon's son and the line of David." So, God calls out to a man named Jeroboam. And He basically gives Jeroboam a promise, just like he gave to David, that he can have a lasting legacy of generations of the faithfulness and the beauty of God if he will but follow God. But what did Jeroboam do? Immediately when he becomes king, he is afraid because the people went to Jerusalem to worship. That's where Rehoboam was. And he thought, "If they continue to go to Jerusalem, I will lose their influence. They will go back to the line of David." And so he has a brilliant solution. He makes and erects idols in Bethel and Dan. And he says, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt." And over the subsequent generations, it is repeated over and over by the kings of the northern kingdom, that they walked in the way of the sins of Jeroboam. The consequences continued from generation to generation until the northern kingdom is literally taken away by Assyria because of their sin. On the other hand, verse 6:

**...but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**

**Lovingkindness.** This is *hesed*, that Hebrew word. This is the heart of this covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. One commentator says **thousands** here might be better read as an innumerable descendancy. Another says by the greatest numerical contrast in the Bible between verses 5 and verse 6, God identified, eloquently, His real desire to have His people remain loyal forever, so that He might, in turn, show them rich blessings. And to see the fulfillment of verse 6,

again, all we have to do is look to the future of Israel. You see, David was a man after God's own heart. Not a perfect man by any stretch of the imagination, but David did not bring idolatry to Israel. David was devoted to Yahweh as the one true God. And you know what it says in subsequent generations over and over, even when the people of Judah begin to sin? It says, **for the sake of David. For David's sake**, God was merciful to those subsequent generations. And in 2 Kings 8:19 we read:

**However, the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah, for the sake of David His servant, since He had promised him to give a lamp to him through his sons always.**

And how did God fulfill that promise to David? **A lamp through his sons always...**all generations. It was through Jesus, who was in the line and the lineage of David. And, today, we are here in this room right now because of God's covenant faithful promise to David, fulfilled by God's own Son, Jesus. And millions and millions of people have been blessed because of God's *hesed*—His lovingkindness—His covenant relationship with His people. And now we can live forever in a new covenant relationship with Him by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Verse 7:

**You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.**

These are really interesting words from the Lord, and there are differing thoughts on what it means. Many of you in this room grew up being told that what this means is to be careful how you speak using God's name. Don't use it flippantly, and certainly don't use it blasphemously. It shouldn't be a curse word or a swear word or anything like that. And think of what Jesus Himself said when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. What were the first words He said? He said, **Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Holy be Thy name.** God's name is to be revered, to be hallowed, to be set apart, not to be used flippantly or blasphemously, but to be honored, because He is God.

Other scholars think that this is more about invoking God's name and making promises or oaths, swearing by God's name that I'll do this or that. But the problem is we are fallen people, and we don't have the integrity of God. And when we don't keep our word, we bring the name of God right into that dishonor. And what did Jesus say in the Sermon on the Mount? He said, *"Don't swear by heaven; don't swear by the temple. Just let your yes be yes and your no be no."* But I think there's even more in verse 7. Some scholars see this idea of taking His name as meaning bearing God's name. One commentator says far more than the utterance of the Divine Name is intended in the third commandment. The Hebrew word *nesa* means to lift up, raise, carry, even wear. Hebrew scholar, Carmen Imes, has written an entire book centered on this issue and points to contextual clues to understand it.

So again, we look back to what God said about this people before He speaks this covenant language in Exodus 19. Do you remember what He called them...last week in verse 5? He said they are *His treasured possession*. Then in verse 6, He said they are a *kingdom of priests*, a *holy nation*, a *nation of priests*. Now we fast forward to when the tabernacle is functioning, and Aaron is consecrated as the priest, and he's wearing his priestly garments. And he wears on his chest the names of all of

the tribes of Israel, and he carries on his forehead the name of God as he goes before God to represent the people. And then you fast forward to just before this people enter the Promised Land, in the renewing of this covenant, it is said, “The Lord has declared this day you are His people, His treasured possession.” And he says, “You will be a people holy to the LORD your God.” And that phrase, holy to the LORD your God, is the exact same phrase Aaron wore on his head as he ministered as a priest, because they were called to be a kingdom of priests, carrying God's name to the rest of the world in the same way the high priest carried and bore God's name.

Psalms 23 is probably the most familiar, and one of the most beloved of all the Psalms. Do you remember what it says in verse 3? It says, *He leads me in the path of righteousness for His name's sake*. Why does God lead his people in paths of righteousness? It is for the sake of His name, His reputation, His honor. God is saying, “You are My people. Now go and live like it. Live like you belong to Me.” Israel is to bear God's name and they were to represent Yahweh to the nations. Therefore, their obedience had missional implications. They were to be a light to the nations as a kingdom of priests. And if they were not obedient to the covenant with Yahweh, the whole thing would break down. And we see the consequences coming to full fulfillment by the later part of the Old Testament by Ezekiel. Now even that treasured tribe of Judah has been taken to exile in Babylon. And in Ezekiel 36, God is explaining what has taken place. He says it is because they defiled the land with their idols. And four times in Ezekiel 36, God says they profaned His name. They didn't revere His name, honor His name, or live as though they were the covenant people of God bearing His name. They brought shame and reproach to His name, through their idolatry. And twice in that chapter God says, “He has acted for the sake of My name.” But even in that darkest of moments, God's mercy, His kindness, His grace shines through as there is a promise of a return for Israel from exile and the foreshadowing of a promise which would even be for us. In Ezekiel 36:26 and 27, he says that “*He will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh and put My spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees.*”

That passage in Ezekiel points forward to us, which raises the important question, “How do all of these commands relate to us? After all, we are living under the new covenant.” Well, let's be clear. There is no command or law that can bring salvation. They never could. In fact, Israel's failure to keep God's covenant clearly pointed to the need for the new covenant for a Savior, for a Messiah, for the perfect Holy One of God, who would perfectly fulfill and complete God's law. That is who Jesus was, and His life and His death and His resurrection on our behalf provides the way for us to forever dwell in the presence of this awesome and holy God. And it is interesting, because when Jesus was repeatedly asked about the commandments, He responded with great clarity. “Teacher,” they said to Him, “What is the greatest commandment?” And He said, “The LORD your God is One.” This Yahweh, covenant-making God of Exodus 20, is the only true God, and He is to be your God. And He said, “The greatest commandment is to love the LORD your God with all of your heart, all your soul, all of your mind, all of your strength.” Interesting, isn't it? Sounds a lot like verses 3 through 7, doesn't it? Put God first, have no other gods before Him. No idols, no idolatry, no spiritual adultery, rather a life lived fully devoted to knowing this one true God and giving all that we are to loving this good, good God.

Now we have something even better than the covenant relationship God gave to Israel in the wilderness. We have what Ezekiel 36 foreshadowed in Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, not only can we be continuously with God, but we also have His power and His presence within us to

empower us as we yield to Him, to become the kind of people who really do love Him with all that we are. Oh, and what else did Jesus say? He said, “The second is like it, ‘Love your neighbor, as yourself.’ All the law and the prophets hang on these two.” You know, I think sometimes in our day, we focus so much on the second part of the Great Commandments, that we forget that its fulfillment only comes through Him. We love because He first loved us. And it is as we point the bow of the ship of our lives toward Him, that we are able to experience both His love and His goodness and His even using us to bring blessing to others. That is at the heart of bearing His name as His image bearers. We draw near to Him that we might become like Him, and that by His Spirit, we might then bring His goodness to others and create flourishing in our little corner of the world.

Scholars sometimes say the first section of the Ten Commandments is vertical, toward God; the rest are horizontal, toward others. While there is certainly truth in that, I believe that can create a dangerous dichotomy, because it is not that we look up to God, and then we move out toward others. Rather, these commands and the Great Commandments that Jesus gave, both demonstrate that it is only in and through God that goodness can come to others. It is, as we live God-ward lives, seeking Him, trusting Him, loving Him, enjoying Him, and depending upon Him, that we might be able to then bring genuine good to the world around us. Next week, we'll see more of God's nature and His vision for flourishing. But for today, I want to share a few questions for you to reflect on this week.

First, just as God reminded Israel of who He was and what He had done on their behalf before beginning the covenant, we too, should remember: What has God done? How specifically has He delivered you? How has He met you? How has He shown Himself, His faithfulness, and His goodness to you? And in light of who He is and all that He has already done for you, how should you then respond? How should we now live? For ourselves? Chasing, pursuing, and bowing down to the things of this world? Or lifting up our heads, our hearts, and our lives, living toward Him and for Him? What would it look like to seek, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be and become the kind of people who enhance His reputation by every word and deed, beautifully bearing His name. Our God is so good, and He has also called us in the New Testament His treasured possession, His royal priesthood, living to **proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light** (1 Peter 2:9).

What a treasure Israel had in their good God and their covenant relationship with Him. But what an even greater treasure we have in Christ. In all of human history, there is only One who has perfectly manifested the character and the goodness of God, only One who is the exact representation of Yahweh, only One who is truly worthy of our worship and our emulation. May we be the people of God by pursuing Him and learning from Him, in dependence on Him, how to become like Him. For to be God's people, is to be godly people.

*Lord, how we thank You for who You are, for what You have done. How we long, God, to draw near to You, to know You, to experience Your goodness, and then in turn to bear Your name, to represent You to a lost and dying world. But it all begins with recognizing who You are and what You have done, and offering ourselves fully back to You. We choose to do that now, to consecrate ourselves, to offer ourselves, to give ourselves to You, Lord God, as the only One truly worthy of our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*



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## WINTER 2024 // WEEK 5

### Life Group Questions

Exodus – The God Who Is With // February 10/11, 2024

To Be God's People is to Be Godly People // Exodus 20:1-7

### Introduction

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After guiding the Israelites through the wilderness all the way to Mount Sinai, God communes with Moses and begins to give the commandments by which His people should live.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Due to preferences over a wide range of groups, we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

### Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

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- 1) Would you rather have a fast-forward, pause, or rewind button on your life?
  
- 2) What is one rule that is difficult for you to follow?

### Getting Started

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Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
    - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
    - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
  - 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.
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## Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) What did you find particularly interesting from this week's sermon, or chapter 20 of Exodus?
  
- 2) Verse 2 depicts God announcing the unique identity that He holds in the eyes of the Israelites, based on His mighty works in delivering them from Egypt. **If God were to speak to you today and identify Himself using an action that He has taken in your life, what might that action be?** (See this week's Scripture Focus exercise for more ideas to apply this to your life.)

Ryan spoke in last week's sermon about God calling His people His "treasured possession." Now, in verse 3, God commands His people, "Have no other gods before me." This indicates to us that God redeemed Israel to be His people, and is therefore the only one deserving of their praise and the authority to establish laws over them. **What does it mean to you to be God's treasured possession?**

How would this have defined the way Israel looked at these commands given by God?

- 3) In Exodus 20:4-6, God expresses His commandment to turn away from the worship of idols. This second commandment functions in the context of the first: God's people are to worship Him alone as the One above all others, and therefore the worship of idols is a transgression against Him. **How can we determine if something is becoming an idol in our lives?**

Consider the things in your own life that tend to become idols for you. **What are they? What are the consequences of putting too much of yourself into those things?**

We've likely all experienced the feeling of jealousy in one way or another. **According to Exodus chapter 20, what does it mean for God to be described as a jealous God? How did Pastor Jeff define it?**

Most of the time we think of jealousy as a negative thing. **How is it a good thing for God to be described as jealous?**

- 4) Based on Exodus 20:7, as well as what you learned in this week's sermon, **what does it mean to take the name of the Lord in vain?**

To bear God's name is to represent Him to a world who does not know Him. **What would it look like for you to faithfully bear God's name in your daily life this week?**

## Personal Spiritual Exercises

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Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.**

**Scripture Focus:** Rewrite Exodus 20:2 using actions that God has taken in your life that He might reference in order to identify Himself to you ("I am the Lord your God, who \_\_\_\_\_") and consider how you can bring praise to Him for how He has worked in your life.

For example, He might say to you "I am the Lord your God, who taught you the meaning of forgiveness and set you free from the guilt and shame of your past."

**Prayer Focus:** The first three of the Ten Commandments are all concerned with how God's people are meant to interact with Him in light of His nature and identity. Here are a few ways that you can observe and praise His nature through prayer this week:

- Address Him as the one true God, who is supreme over all of creation.
- Thank Him for His laws and correction, which create order out of chaos.
- Acknowledge and repent of the things that tend to become idols in your life.
- Ask him for opportunities to bear His name well.

### **Prayer** *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

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A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?