

## GRACIOUSLY GOD

By revealing himself in his redeeming actions God reveals his gracious and merciful nature.

Q. The Israelites also experienced graciousness. What underserved gifts or treatment have you received from our gracious God?

## CONTEMPORARY COMPETITION

Two ageless, and therefore contemporary contradictions to the first commandment in the actions of God's people common. Can you define these two in your own words? How do they affect your view of God?

1. Syncretism

2. Sensualism

## Exercise

In the same way that the gods of the Canaanites seduced the people of Israel from their love and devotion to Yahweh, the gods of our society, our cultural norms, can seduce us from the love of God. Employ these questions in your evening reflections:

- ◆ Was Jesus Christ my Lord today?
- ◆ Did I serve him faithfully today?
- ◆ Did I love him deeply?
- ◆ Did I worship him exclusively?
- ◆ How did the little 'gods' of my life make unwarranted incursions into my faith today?
- ◆ What acts of double standards did I employ?
- ◆ What choices did I have before me today and how could I have changed my decisions where they went astray?
- ◆ Did I call on the Spirit in prayer to help my relationship stay in tact with God today?



## 10 Commandments

Exodus 20:1-21  
#1 Who's number 1

### Introduction

*"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."*

*Deuteronomy 5:6,7 (NIV)*

10 Ways  
2 Live

### Interpretive Illustrations

Christian teachers have given us some helpful images of how to view the commandments today:

#### 1. A Compass

Many people are directionless in matters of morality and spiritual truth. The commandments are not merely negative statements, "don't do this, don't do that". Rather they point to true north - loving God and loving neighbour. Each of the "Do not" commands have their positive side. "You shall not commit adultery" becomes "Husbands and wives shall stay faithful to each other". A clear and positive direction.



The commandments of Exodus chapter 20 can be roughly broken into 3 key areas of life:

- i) A right relationship with God vv. 2-7;
- ii) worship of God vv. 8-11;
- iii) a right relationship with society vv. 12-17.

The positive side of the commandments give us true north in these arenas of life.

DISCUSS: How might you re-write the 10 commandments in the positive? Take one and put your example in the positive here...

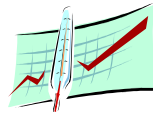
## 2. A Bridle

The prohibitive side of the commandments are like the bridle on a horse. When temptation leads us to covet what does not belong, the command “Do not steal” informs the conscience and bridles the wild direction we might take.



## 3. A Thermometer

Some see the first four commandments like a thermometer. That is, we can test the temperature of our love for God. Do we have no other God's before Him? Are we straying to make our possessions and passions an idol of worship? Do we tolerate or participate in abuse of God's name? These help us to hear the voice of God's Spirit reminding us of God's mercy, love, and unique authority.



TEST: Rate your “temperature” in regard to your love for God today.

Cold  Hot

## 4. A Mirror

Some see the commandments as a mirror, showing us reality. As we look, we discover what sin really is; not the mere crossing of boundaries, but the wrong motives and innate propensity in us which leads to sin. When society tells us we can do what we like so long as it hurts no-one, the Commandments present God-spoken absolutes which tell it like it really is.



## 6. A Guardian

Galatians ch. 3 likens the Law to a guardian or schoolmaster who supervises us on our way to knowing Christ. They can only take us so far, bringing us to the point of realizing our own weakness and our need for God's mercy and salvation. They remind us that we can never be independent from God; we need God's love and forgiveness at all times. The guardian directs me to my need for Christ.



## **Gods & Idols**

John Calvin, quoting Cicero, said that “There is a seed of religion planted in all people.”

READ the following texts that speak of our common need for God or ‘gods’:

- ⇒ Psalm 19:1
- ⇒ Romans 1:18-20
- ⇒ Acts 17:16,22,27

A pantheon of deities formed the religion of the Canaanites. These idols directly related to the needs of the people to control the weather, the time, the land, the economy, their fertility, their politics and their wars.

Q. What might be today's “idols” in a post-pagan society?

## **Uniquely God**

The text in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 gives us the rationale behind the 1st commandment. “The Lord is One.” The Canaanites looked at the great forces of nature, identified them as deities and named them. They then tried to assess the relationship between those ‘gods’ and how to relate to them. By contrast, God starts by revealing himself personally (to Abram in Genesis 12-15) and to Moses (Ex. 3).

Q. In what ways does God's claim to be one challenge and undermine the ‘gods’ on offer?

## **Supremely God**

By insisting that the Israelites put no other god before God, Yahweh claims to be supremely God.

Q. What proofs had the Israelites seen that God's authority was supreme? What proofs have you seen in your own experience?