

**The Ten Commandments**  
**Lesson 3: Worship God**  
**Repudiating False Gods and Worshiping the True God**

Exodus 20:3 states, *“You shall have no other gods before Me.”* This is the first of the Ten Commandments. As is often true in Scriptures, the first item in the list colors all the rest, acting as the fountainhead for the stream that follows. This is true for the first of the Ten Commandments. It is the foundation on which all else is built and that foundation is this: the Lord God is the One True God. Our choice of a god to worship affects all that we think and all other choices that we make and all that we say or do, as well as the way in which we worship.

To truly have the Lord God as the one true God in life means that we worship only Him—that He is supreme in our hearts and minds and receives all of our worship. True worship includes **adoration, affection, attention, allegiance, and alliance**. When we truly worship God, we **adore** Him, praising Him for who He is, passionate about our relationship to Him, following Him gladly and wholeheartedly. Our **affection** (love) is directed to Him in our thoughts, words, and actions. Our **attention** is focused on Him—we listen to Him and are ready to obey whatever He says. We follow Him as Lord and God, giving Him total, unconditional **allegiance**, showing Him loyalty in every detail of life. And all of our **alliances**, every relationship we have, reflect the fact that we follow the one true God. We don’t ally with the enemies of God—the world system, the devil, or the flesh. We worship the Lord our God, and only the Lord our God.

How does this type of worship work out in daily life? What does Scripture reveal about true worship of the one true God? What does it mean to *“have no other gods”* besides Him? What dangers do we face in seeking to follow the one true God? Does it really matter after all? If it does, then how does it matter day in and day out?

### I. One True God.

When the children of Israel were delivered from slavery in Egypt, the Lord led them to Mount Sinai to meet Him and receive His Law. It was an awesome event marked by a supernatural display of His power and majesty. The Lord literally spoke from Mount Sinai to the people gathered at the foot of the mountain. His words made clear His will for them and all who would read the record. In Deuteronomy 5:4, Moses recalled that time in a very personal picture, *“The Lord spoke to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire.”* The Ten Commandments reveal God’s love and intentions for His people.

1. The first commandment reveals the relationship that God established with His people. As we look at this command, we will see that relationship more clearly and understand more fully the essential truth of worshiping the one true God. In knowing and worshiping Him each of us can find the relationship for which each of us was created. First, we must look at how God showed Himself to the Israelites as well as to other nations.
  - When reading Exodus 20:1-23, keep in mind that this encounter between God and the Israelites was similar to the way in which the king of one nation would enter into treaty or covenant with another nation. Like the record in Exodus 19:3-8, the record in Exodus 20 presents the **parties** involved, the **history** of their relationship, the **requirements** of the agreement, the promised **blessings**, and concludes with the **agreement**, as witnessed by the people. We find each of these elements in Exodus 20:1-23.

- i. Who are the parties involved in Exodus 20:1-2?  
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- ii. What significance do you see in how the Lord identifies Himself?  
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- iii. On what historical events does God focus? How does He speak of the relationship between Himself and the nation of Israel?  
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2. God begins with a statement of who He is – *“I am the LORD your God.”* He is the first party, the sovereign Lord, and Israel is the second party, His chosen nation. God’s statement begins with an emphatic *“I”* in the Hebrew language. Who is He? The name **“LORD”** (usually written in all capitals in most translations) is a translation of the Hebrew word *Yahweh or Jehovah* and emphasizes the self-existent nature of God. He is dependent on no one. The name **“LORD”** is related to His name **“I AM WHO I AM”** revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Our English word **“God”** in this verse is translated from the Hebrew *Elohim*, the name of God as the all-powerful Creator. He is not just *“a god”* or even *“the God.”* He states, *“I am the Lord your God,”* emphasizing His relationship with the people of Israel.
3. Through a series of miraculous historical events, this God brought the children of Israel *“out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”* The land of Egypt had been their home for 430 years, but it was never intended to be their permanent residence. God always intended to bring them to the Promised Land of Canaan. In Exodus 6:7, God promised He would bring them *“out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”*
4. Because of Pharaoh’s reluctance to grant the Israelites freedom to return to their homeland, God sent ten plagues upon the land of Egypt. Read Exodus 7:14-25; Exodus 8-11; and 12:12-13, 29-31. Each plague was a confrontation with and judgment upon one or more of the Egyptian gods.

Plague	Scripture	Egyptian god/goddess	god/goddess of
Water to Blood	Exodus 7:14-25	Nile River (the god Hapi)	The Nile was considered sacred
Frogs	Exodus 8:1-15	Heqet/Hekhet	goddess of birth (woman with a frog’s head)
Lice/Gnats	Exodus 8: 16-19	Set	god of the desert
Swam of Flies	Exodus 8:20-32	Uatchit/Kheprer	god of resurrection
Disease on animals	Exodus 9:1-7	Apis and Hathor	Bull god and goddess (woman with a cow’s head)
Boils	Exodus 9:8-17	Sekmet, Sunu and Isis	goddess of plagues, healing, and pestilence
Hailstorm	Exodus 9:18-35	Nut	goddess of sky
Locust	Exodus 10:1-20	Osiris	god of crops
Darkness	Exodus 10:21-29	Re (Amon-Re) and Horus, Nut	sun gods and goddess of sky
Death of Firstborn	Exodus 11:1-10; 12:12-13, 29-31	Pharaoh, his son, Isis, Anubis,	Pharaoh and son considered gods; Isis protect children, Anubis, god of the dead.

These faceoffs showed that God controls everything, and the Egyptian gods were no match for Him. The plagues showed the ability of Almighty God and the inability of the gods and goddesses. God was executing judgment against the gods of Egypt—all of them (Exodus 12:12, 29-32).

As God prepared Moses and the people for their exodus from Egypt, He made clear His declaration of war—*“Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the Lord.”* When He went through the land of Egypt on the night of the Passover, He judged Egypt, its people, and its gods—particularly Pharaoh and his son—who were both considered gods. Through that judgment God delivered Israel out of Egypt.

After the Passover and Pharaoh’s decision to release the slaves because of the plagues sent by God, the people left Egypt, following the cloud of glory and the pillar of fire. How did God reveal Himself as God at the Red Sea? Read Exodus 14 to grasp the full picture. What stands out about the Lord God in that encounter?

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The people of Israel continued to witness God’s power. What did the Israelites declare about God in Exodus 15:1-10?

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- Read Exodus 15:11. How is God compared with all other gods?
- Look at Exodus 15:14-16. How did other nations respond to the news concerning the Israelites’ deliverance at the Red Sea?

The Lord gave continual testimony to Israel about who He is as the one true God. That truth is the bedrock foundation for all of life, even as it is the fountainhead commandment for the Ten Commandments. All the other commands rest on Command One and flow out of the reality that God indeed is the one true God.

## II. “No Other Gods Before Me”

The question may come to mind: With all that God did to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, was it necessary to discuss the issue of other gods? After all, they had seen God work miracle after miracle since He introduced Moses and Aaron as His appointed leaders. First, there were the ten plagues, then the pillar of cloud and fire leading them to the parting of the red Sea, and then the miracles of manna and water. What was going on in their hearts and minds during these miraculous events? Could they not see God for who He is? Let’s look at these newly freed people as they faced these truths. At the same time, let’s consider how well we are honoring the Lord as the one true God.

- 1) Read Exodus 20:3 and write your observations. Note the negative side—what they should not do—and the positive side—what should they do.

The people were to shun any false gods and were to follow the one true God. They were to have the Lord (Yahweh) God as their only God. He was to be their focus in worship, devotion, and obedience. God wanted them to follow Him alone. The danger of choosing another god was not apparent to them, but it was clear to God.

- A. The Hebrew word *elohim*, translated in Exodus 20:3 as “gods,” can refer to rulers, judges, angels, or any supernatural being. So in this command, God is stating that no one in any of these categories is to be treated as a god. The face of the Lord is the only face we are to seek and worship. No one is to stand in His place; no one is to share His place, competing with Him for our attention and affection. As we were created to breathe, so we were created to worship. Everyone worships someone or something; we cannot do otherwise. The question is who or what will we worship? God knew that this choice would be an issue with the people of Israel, even as it is with everyone born on earth, regardless of the outward evidence of God’s power and might.
- B. Though the people saw God’s miraculous power again and again, they failed to trust Him as God. Because of their disobedience at Kadesh Barnea, their entry point into the Promised Land, the people had to wander in the wilderness for forty years. A new generation grew up who needed reminding of who God is and what He expected. Just before the people went into the land of Canaan, God focused His people once again on who He is as the one true God. Deuteronomy records this event as the second giving of the Law, forty years after God originally spoke the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai.
- a. Look at the following verses from Deuteronomy.
    - i. Deuteronomy 4:32-39
    - ii. Deuteronomy 6:10-15
  - b. The people needed to be continually reminded that God
    - i. is the Creator who literally spoke to them from Mount Sinai and revealed Himself in “*great fire.*”
    - ii. delivered Israel by many “*trials, by signs and wonders and by war.*”
    - iii. is a warrior whose “*mighty hand*” and “*great terrors*” revealed His power.
- C. God wanted His people to personally experience and know the “*the Lord, He is God; there is no other beside Him.*” He is not only “*God in heaven above and on earth below,*” the God of great power, but also the Lord of great love. He chose Israel “because He loved” the people of that nation. In His love, He gave them “*great and splendid cities*” and many other gifts. Moses called the people to fear God, to worship Him alone, and never to follow any other gods. He didn’t want them to be deceived by the gods of Canaan and the surrounding nations, lest the Lord deal with them harshly in jealous anger.
- D. After the Israelites entered Canaan many years later, their tendency to worship other gods was still present. In Joshua 23-24, Joshua makes clear his awareness of the problem of other gods, the “gods beyond the River” in Abraham’s former land (Ur of the Chaldees), as well as the gods of Egypt and the gods of the Canaanites.

Read Joshua 23:6-7, 11 and 24:14-15. What did Joshua command concerning other gods and concerning the Lord?

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The call of Joshua and of the law of Moses was to keep all of the law, never turning aside from it (see Joshua 23:6-7). That meant not associating with the other nations or their gods. The Israelites were not to even mention the names of the other gods, and they were certainly not to serve or bow to them. Joshua commanded that the people make a choice about which God they would serve. His own convictions were clear; his devotion would be to the Lord God of Israel, the one true God. He

would love the Lord, cling to Him alone, fear Him, and *“serve Him in sincerity and truth.”* That is the choice each of us is confronted with today.

- E. God reveals Himself as God to each generation from the time of the Exodus to the time of Christ’s birth. He sent many prophets to continually call Israel to follow and obey the Lord as the one true God. Isaiah is one example.

Read Isaiah 45:5-6 and record your thoughts. \_\_\_\_\_

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What did God reveal in Isaiah 45:21-24? What is His call and command? \_\_\_\_\_

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God made it clear who He is—*“I am the Lord”*—Yahweh, the self-existent One (dependent on no other), the only One able to bring salvation to sinful humanity. The phrase *“no other God besides Me”* simply means that there is no god except Him. Only the one true God, Jehovah/Yahweh, can fulfill the claim to be God. He is *“a righteous God and Savior.”* He, therefore, issues the invitation and command, *“Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth,”* He commands us to follow and obey Him, to trust Him and His *“righteousness and strength.”*

How has God revealed Himself as the one true God in your life? In the Scriptures, we clearly see the Lord revealing Himself fully and showing that all other gods are false imitations and substitutes. Has He revealed any substitute god in your life? Now is the time to recognize and repudiate (refuse to accept or be associated with) anything that is not real. Don’t be fooled into accepting a substitute for Him!

**Next Week’s Lesson: Worship God.** Topics: The Testimony of the New Testament, Unknown God, or Well-Known God? For Me to Follow God.

**Homework:** Review John 1:1-14, 18; Hebrews 1:1-8 and Romans 1:19-21, 2:11-16.