

The First Commandment

YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

We cannot live without putting our trust in someone or something else. Why? Because we did not create ourselves. We did not give ourselves life, so we must look somewhere else to find a full and meaningful life.

Where do people look to find such things as happiness, identity, security, meaning, and help? The answer may reveal their god, for a god is that to which we look for all good.

As Christians, we look for what we need in life and in death to the God who created and redeemed us. God both demands and desires that we look to Him for all that we need.

Read Matthew 6:25–34

Note the different examples and reasons Jesus gives for us to put our trust in God.

In what ways does God generously provide me with what I need for my daily life and salvation?

A CLOSER READING OF THE SMALL CATECHISM

19. What does it mean to have a god?

It means to rely on something or someone that we believe will give us what we need, such as security, identity, purpose, and all other good things.

- 44 **Acts 17:16** In Athens St. Paul “saw that the city was full of idols.”
- 45 **Prov. 11:28** Whoever trusts in his riches will fall.
- 46 **Matt. 10:37** Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

20. Why doesn't God want us to have any other gods besides Him?

God alone is our Creator. He is the only one who can provide us with what we need for time and eternity.

Read Isaiah 42:5–8 and note why God will not share His glory with other gods.

- 47 **Ps. 116:5** Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful.
- 48 **Is. 42:8** I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

21. What does God require of us in the first commandment?

He wants us to rely on Him alone for all that we need in life and in death, not on ourselves or on anything or anyone else. We are not to confuse the Creator with His creation.

Read **Proverbs 3:5-10** and identify the various ways that we trust or do not trust God.

49 **Matt. 4:10** [Jesus said,] “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.”

50 **Rom. 1:22-23** Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

51 **Ps. 115:4** Their idols are silver and gold.

22. How should we show that the Creator alone is our God?

We should fear, love, and trust in Him.

52 **Ps 111:10** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

53 **Deut. 6:5** You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

54 **Prov. 3:5** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

23. Who should fear, love, and trust in God?

Every person on earth should fear, love, and trust in God.

55 **Ps. 22:27** All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You.

56 **Rev. 5:13** And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

24. Who is the only true God?

The only true God is the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons in one divine being (the Holy Trinity).

Read Genesis 1:1–3 and Matthew 3:16–17. Note how the three persons of the Trinity are present and active.

57 **Matt. 28:19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

58 **2 Cor. 13:14** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

59 **Num. 6:24–26** “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”

25. Why should all people fear, love, and trust in God?

God created all people and designed us to live under His

care, relying on Him.

60 **Mal 2:10** Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

61 **1 Cor. 8:6** There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

26. What does it mean to fear God above all things?

It means to take God seriously as Creator and Judge. He will hold us accountable for how we live. He means what He says when He threatens to punish those who disobey.

62 **Prov. 8:13** The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.

63 **Matt. 10:28** And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Also read **Luke 12:4-7; Psalm 96:4-13.**

27. What does it mean to love God above all things?

It means that we cherish and adore God more than anything else and gladly devote our lives to His service.

64 **Ps. 73:25-26** Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

65 **John 14:15** If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

Also read Mark 10:17-27; Ps 73:25-28.

28. What does it mean to trust God above all things?

It means that we rely on God to take care of us and to keep His promises.

66 **Ps. 118:8** It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.

67 **Prov. 3:5** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

Also read Genesis 12:1-9 and 15:1-6; Psalm 118:6-9; I Samuel 17:31-47; John 14:1-6; Philippians 4:19; Psalm 56:3-4, 10-11.

29. What does it mean to fear, love, and trust in God above all things?

It means that we look to God first and foremost for our well-being, rather than to things such as these:

* Human achievements such as intellect, technology, medical advances (Genesis 11:1-9—"Let us make a name for ourselves"v. 4);

* Human goodness or religious devotion (Luke 18:9-14—"God, I thank You that I am not like other men"; v. 11);

* Money and possessions (Luke 18:18-24—"He became very sad, for he was extremely rich"; v. 23);

* Pleasures such as food, drink, drugs, or sex (I Corinthians 6:12-20—"So glorify God in your body"; v. 20);

* Family and friends (Matthew 10:37-39—"Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"; v. 39).

30. What happens when we trust in these things rather than our Creator?

We confuse the Creator with His creation, setting up false gods that cannot support us and provoking God to wrath. When we fail to keep the First Commandment, we inevitably break all the other commandments as well.

68 **Matt. 6:19, 21** "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. . . . For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

69 **Eph. 5:5** For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Also read Exodus 32:1-10; Romans 1:18-25.

31. What happens when we look to our Creator for all that we need?

Our lives are given a firm foundation, and we will gladly seek to keep all the other commandments.

Read Deuteronomy 30:15-20.

70 **Proverbs 11:28** Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.

71 **Matthew 6:33** "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

72 **Deut. 30:19b-20a** Therefore choose life, that you

and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him, for He is your life and length of days.

CONNECTIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The First Commandment in Exodus

32. Read Exodus 20:1–3. Why do the commandments begin with the words, “I am the Lord Your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt”?

These words identify Israel’s God, the one who rescued them from Egypt. The Creator who rescued Israel is the one who also rescued us from sin and death by sending His Son to die and rise for us. (Read John 3:16)

33. Read Exodus 20:4. What are graven images?

Graven images are statues and likenesses of something. This does not refer to art that glorifies the true God, but to statues of idols that were worshipped as gods. This verse is not a separate commandment but a further explanation of what it means not to have other gods.

34. Read Exodus 20:5–6. Why does God make these threats and promises?

God will not tolerate any other gods. No other “god” can give and sustain life. God threatens to punish sin so that we fear His wrath and do not break His commands. Even more, He promises to bless us so that we love and trust Him and willingly keep His commands.

Non-Christian Religions

35. Do all religions worship the same God? *No.*

* Some religions teach that life includes a spiritual dimension, but they reject the Creator and His revelation of salvation in Jesus and look to “other gods” or spiritual experiences (for example, Animism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism). Read **Daniel 3**.

* Some religions regard the Old Testament as sacred writings and claim to worship the God of Abraham, but they reject the Triune God by rejecting His revelation of salvation in Jesus Christ (for example, Islam and Judaism.) Read **Romans 1:16–25**.

* Some religions claim to be Christian and hold the Bible sacred, but they reject Scripture’s witness that Jesus is the true Son of God, one with the Father, and they therefore also deny the doctrine of the Trinity (for example, Mormonism and the Jehovah’s Witnesses). Read **John 10:22–30**.

* Some religious practices involve seeking help from supernatural forces, but to do so is in opposition to God the Creator who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ (for example, Satanism, sorcery, superstitions, spirits of the dead, good luck charms, psychics). Read **1 Samuel 28** and note how Saul disobeyed God.

* Some religions or religious practices combine elements of some of the above or simply believe in a generic deity. All of these approaches reject God’s exclusive revelation of salvation in Jesus Christ alone

(for example, syncretism and moralistic therapeutic deism). Read **Psalm 53:1**; **Psalm 14:1**.

Lord God, author and source of all that is good, give us wisdom to fear Your wrath, strength to love You above all things, and faith to trust in Your promises alone that by Your grace we may serve You all our days and finally come to inherit Your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

*Sing praise to God the highest good,
The author of creation,
The God of love who understood
Our need for His salvation.
With healing balm our souls He fills
And ev'ry faithless murmur stills:
To God all praise and glory!*

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