

First Things First

Vince Lombardi, the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers, once addressed the players regarding a dismal performance. He picked up a football and told them to sit down. They sat and they waited. He looked at them, held up the ball and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football." With those five words Lombardi redirected all of them to what really mattered, the basics. He focused their minds better than all the football training manuals ever written could hope to do.

God does the same with us through the Ten Commandments. In these ten short instructions, God tells us more about our relationship with him and how we are to relate to others than all the self help books in the library taken together. This week we will follow God's lead and put first things first. As we look at the First Commandment, focus your mind and heart on what really matters: God and God alone.

Monday – Put God First

"God alone satisfies." Thomas A' Kempis, 14th-15th c. German theologian

1. Please read Exodus 20:1-3. Why might God have chosen to start the 10 Commandments with this particular command?
2. According to Deuteronomy 6:4-9, what importance does God put on his commands?
3. What do these verses from Deuteronomy tell you about your relationship with God, with your family and with your neighbors?

Making it Personal: How easy do you find it to follow the First Commandment? Why?

Tuesday – Idolizing

"God will either give us what we ask, or what He knows to be better for us." Bernard of Clairvaux, 12th c. French abbot and religious reformer

1. Please read Colossians 3:5. What does it say about the relationship between greed and idolatry?
2. Some of the things we can get greedy about are technology (more toys, gadgets, tools), food (tasty treats, fast food, delicacies) and money (just a little more is sure to make me satisfied!). What does God's word say about these things in Habakkuk 1:15-16, Philippians 3:19, Job 31:24-25 & 28, and Matthew 6:24?

Making it Personal: What idols do you have in your life? Pray for God to help you put him ahead of all else.

Wednesday – Tempting, tempting

"God's help is nearer than the door." Irish proverb

1. Please read Matthew 4:1-11. In what ways was Jesus tempted to break the First Commandment? Have you ever faced similar temptations, even if on a lesser scale? When?

Text Insight: As Jesus stood on the highest point of the temple, the drop was not into the city. Instead, Jesus looked down a cliff face into the Kidron Valley on the eastern edge of Jerusalem. It was a long drop.

2. Now look at 1 John 5:19-21 and James 4:7. How did Jesus fulfill these verses during his temptations?

Making it Personal: No matter your temptations, remember Jesus' example and pray for God to strengthen you in putting him first.

Thursday – Lawfully Delighted

"Instead of complaining that God had hidden himself, you will give Him thanks for having revealed so much of Himself." Blaise Pascal, 17th c. French mathematician, physicist and philosopher

1. Please read Psalm 1:1-6. What importance does the writer put on following God's ways?
2. Now look at Proverbs 3:1-6. How will following these verses put God first in a person's life?

Prayer Focus: Pray for God's people to put him first, following the instructions in Proverbs 3 and Psalm 1.

Friday – F.I.R.S.T.

"He loses nothing that loses not God." George Herbert, 17th c. Welsh poet and priest

1. Putting God first is difficult for many people in a variety of areas in their lives. Read the following passages and list what they say about the areas of Finances, Interests, Relationships, Schedules and Troubles: Proverbs 3:9-10; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; Proverbs 12:26; Ephesians 5:15-17; and Psalm 50:15.
2. How does Jesus assure us in Matthew 6:25-33 that putting God first will work out well for each of us?

Making it Personal: What do you need to do to put God first in your Finances, Interests, Relationships, Schedules and Interests? Pray for him to guide you through this, to guide you to him first and always.

For the Weekend: Read Malachi 3:6-18; in what ways did God's people fail to put him first with their possessions and their lives? How did God respond when they chose to put him first?