

ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES  
Ten Values That Build Strong Families - Part 2  
Exodus 20:4-5  
Rick Warren

Last week we started a new series that I'm calling Ten Values to Build Strong Families and we're looking at the Ten Commandments. Today we're going to look at the 2nd commandment and how it will build our families and make them stronger.

Exodus 20:4-5 "You shall not make any idols, you must never bow to an image or worship it in any way."

This is one thing that Jews, Moslems and Christians all agree on, the Ten Commandments. Everybody accepts that these are what God wants us to live by. The second commandment says two things: don't idolize anything and worship God only.

I. DON'T IDOLIZE ANYTHING

What is an idol? An idol is anything that takes the focus off God and puts it on something else. When anything is first in my life that is not God it's an idol even if its good. What does it mean to idolize? In this sense it means to value something more than God. Some people park their idols in their garage. some people dock their idols at Dana Point Marina. Some people put their idols in their safe deposit box. But even today we have to deal with idols.

It's interesting, archaeologists tell us in every culture throughout history there have been idols. Statues, little gods, goddesses -- things like this. There is the desire of man, for some reason, to turn objects or people or things into objects of worship. God says don't do that.

In Bible times there were three primary idols. There was Baal who was the god of sex. There was Mammon who was the god of money. And there was Molech who was the god of violence. We don't have those mental idols today, we just pay billions of dollars today to go to movies to watch sex, violence and money. it's the same things. In those days, their idols were made of stone, brick, rock, clay, wood or metal. Today we have mental images not metal images. The shrine that you find in a lot of homes in the Orient, the shrine in America is the little box that you plug in called the TV. Every night when we turn it on we see our idols on TV. We don't worship objects as much as we worship images, images of success, images of wealth, images of status, images of sensuality. It's very difficult to raise your kids in

an environment where the society is saying, these are the most important things in life and you're trying to say, no there are other values that are more important. So you have to teach your kids the disadvantages of idols.

In Deut. 4 "For your own good don't sin by making an idol in any form at all." Circle the phrase "for your own good". He says for your own good don't make an idol. Today we wear our idols on T-shirts. People proudly proclaim what they're committed to. God says for your own good don't idolize anything or anyone. Why?

1. Idols will disappoint me.

They always promise more than they can deliver. Jeremiah 10:14 "Those who make idols are disillusioned because the gods they made are false and lifeless." On TV it says Wear our label and you'll be popular, buy our product and you'll be successful, drink our beer and it doesn't get any better than this, buy our toothpaste and you'll have sex appeal. They always promise more than they can deliver.

Have you ever ordered something through a mail order catalog and when you got it you were disappointed with what you got? Anytime you put any person, any thing, any product in the place of God, anytime you expect any one to solve all your problems or guarantee all your happiness you're going to be disappointed. Idols will always disappoint you.

2. Idols will dominate you.

If you don't watch out for it they end up controlling your life.

"Before you knew Christ you were controlled by dead idols, who always led you astray." Circle "controlled" and "always led astray". It says there are two inevitable effects when you love something more than God:

- 1) The thing you love more than God will begin to control you. The word we use today for idols is the word "addiction". You can be addicted to your work, to sex, to sports, to numerous things besides alcohol or drugs. But eventually it runs your life when you love something more than you love God. People say "I can give it up at any time." Then why don't you. It will dominate your life and it will distract your life.

2) You will be led astray, you lose your perspective when something takes place in your life that ought to be where God is. How many people by the lure of a promotion were led to neglect their family at a crucial time in the kids lives? Or for the promise of fame compromised their integrity? Or for the profit motive they threw their convictions out the door. God says if you don't watch out, an idol, anything that you love more than God will distract you and you will lose your values. It will dominate your life. You may never have realized this but if you allow a person in your life to so control your life by their approval or disapproval (you always control your actions by whether they approve of it or not) if you allow them to control you and chose what's right for you, even if it's the wrong thing, that's not just called co-dependency, that's called idolatry. It's making that person god. The number one way to break a co-dependency is 1) put God first in your life and 2) give your ultimate devotion to Him and not to anybody else.

### 3. Idols will deform you.

They will change you. They'll warp you, you will lose your uniqueness that God gave you because you become like what you value most. Psalm 115:8 "Those who make idols become like them and so will those who trust in them." We shape an idol and it ends up shaping us. You will become like whatever is first place in your life. So you better reserve that spot for God or you're going to get deformed from being what God meant for you to be in the first place.

One time a rich young ruler came to Jesus. He was a yuppie. He said "What must I do to follow Christ? What must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus says to this yuppie, "Go, sell everything you've got and give it to the poor and come follow me." It's interesting that not one other time in the Bible did Jesus say that to anybody. He only said it to him. Why? Because Jesus knew what was the idol in his life and that was his bank account. He went straight to the heart of the issue and said, You've got another god in your life and if you really want to follow Me, give up what you've got and come, follow Me. Be willing to let go of anything for Me to be first in your life. It says that this yuppie counted the cost, decided it wasn't worth it and walked away sadly and did not follow Him.

What do you need to give up? What is it that you're holding on to that's keeping you from being all God wants you to be? "I don't want to let go of this relationship; I know it's not right

but I don't want to let go of it." "I know this career is not right but I'm going to hold on to it." "I know this habit isn't right, but I'm going to hold on to it." It's an idol. If God tells you to give up something and you can't let go of it, you don't own it, it owns you.

Have you ever thought of how big a fifty dollar bill looks in church when you're giving an offering and how small it looks at the grocery store? Why does it look so big when I'm going to give it to God?

(A family was going home from church and the father was complaining about the service: the sermon was too long, the music was too loud, the room was too hot. And he was griping and complaining when the son in the back seat said, "Dad, I didn't think it was such a bad show for a buck.")

Do you remember the 3rd in the Indiana Jones series, the Last Crusade? In the last scene they find the holy grail. Then there is an earthquake, the earth splits and the lady who's been trying to get the grail through the whole show, falls down into a crevice. She's either got to grab the grail or let go. They're saying, Save your life! But she reaches after the wrong thing and loses her life. She couldn't let go. Idols will distract you, dominate you, disappoint you, and will eventually destroy you if you don't watch out. So God says, "For your own good don't let anything get first place in your life -- career, girlfriend, dream, not anything, keep Me first."

## II. WORSHIP ONLY GOD!

How does this apply to our families? Have you ever heard anybody say, "I worship the ground she walks on." God says "Worship only Me". Worship means give my highest love and devotion. Only God deserves my highest loyalty. Not any person, any career, any thing, only God deserves that because He made me. Unfortunately, most people are like the people talked about in Romans 1 "Many exchange the truth about God for a lie; they worship and serve what God has created instead of the Creator himself." Do you know anybody that does that? They are all out at the beach this week. Recreation. Millions of people are "wreaking creation" right now. They are worshiping the creation rather than the creator. They're not in church.

It blew my mind when I thought about the crazy things that people will worship -- intelligent rational human beings. They will worship nature -- the radical environmentalists will worship

trees and nature. They will worship pyramids, good luck charms, stars, astrology, crystals (look to it for guidance and power). What in the world would make intelligent, rational human beings do such stupid things?

There are three motives behind idols. Why would people want to make God into a statue or a form that they can bow down to?

1. It is an attempt to limit God's location.

If I can put God in a statue or if I can put Him in a place, like God is only at church, or if I can put Him in a crystal or in something like that then I know exactly where God is. If I don't want Him to be around, I just leave Him. In fact, I don't really want God around me all the time, so if I have Him in a crystal, a little box, I can just shut the door and He can't see what I'm doing. It makes me feel a whole lot better. I don't want God going everywhere I go. I don't want Him seeing everything I do.

But He does. If I can put God on my shelf or only at church, then I can think, I've got Him under control -- it's limiting His location.

2. It's an attempt to reduce His power and size.

I'm going to whittle Him down to size. If I've got God in a statue, in a little box or an idea (God's only in the Bible) then it's less imposing, less threatening, He's not everywhere and He can't do everything. He's more convenient and more manageable. We have reversed Genesis 1:27 that says "Let us make man in our image" and now we're saying, Let us make God in our image. We want to make God like us. Instead of "This is the day the Lord's made" we say "this is the Lord, the day has made."

People say "My idea of God is..." I want to ask "What made you the authority?" Just because you think God is a certain way doesn't mean it's right. You better know the real facts. I could say I think God's a frog, that doesn't mean it's right. What you're doing is you're shaping God to your own standards. It's a whole lot easier to change my image of God than it is to change me.

So if God says, "Don't commit adultery" I just change my image of God. I say "I don't think God cares about that and He kind of winks at immorality." A lot of people change their theology because they can't justify their lifestyle any other way. We want to make God like us. God calls that idolatry.

The little girl was drawing a picture at school and she said, "I'm drawing a picture of God." The teacher said, "But nobody knows what God looks like." The girl said, "They will when I get through." That's harmless for a kid but a lot of adults are doing that. I'll make God in my image so He justifies my lifestyle and I don't have to worry about it. We want God in our lives but we want Him in small, premeasured doses. We don't want this thing to get out of control, out of hand. I want just enough God to bless me but I don't want Him to run my life.

Really what I want is a genie. That's what most people want. Not a god but a genie.

3. That's the third reason they have idols, they want to control God.

When you have an idol, the worshiper has more control than the person being worshiped. A lot of people want a god that they can manipulate.

Like the little boy who wanted a new bicycle and told his mom. She said "Why don't you pray about it?" He decided he would write a letter to Jesus "Dear Jesus, I want a new bicycle and I've been perfect for the last year." He knew that wasn't write so he crumpled the page and threw it away. "Dear Jesus, I've been a good boy most of the time." He knew that wasn't right so he threw that away. "Dear Jesus, I want to be a good boy." He new that wasn't right either, so he threw that away. He goes into the living room, grabs the statue of Mary, wraps it up in a towel and throw it under the bed. Then he writes, "If you ever want to see your mother again..."

I know an awful lot of adults who try to do that in an adult way. They try to manipulate God. "God, You owe me this." "God, I demand this." You don't demand anything and you don't manipulate God. That's not the way God says we do it. We worship Him only.

There are three benefits of worshiping God only, putting Him first in our lives.

1. IT WILL DELIGHT ME -- fulfillment

When you put God first in your life and you love Him first, God says you will experience all the fulfillment in life that you've been looking for in other places.

Ps. 37:4 "Seek your happiness in the Lord and He will give you your heart's desire." Look at that promise. He says if I seek my happiness in the Lord, not in other things, but in the Lord, God will give me my heart's desire. That is a guarantee. He says, Try it; put Me first, and love Me first and worship Me first and watch if I don't bring the fulfillment you've always wanted in life.

So many people I've talked to have said, "My only regret is that I wish I had given my life to Christ sooner because all the things I was looking for in fulfillment were there in Him and I was just looking in the wrong places."

Romans 10:11 "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." Accept no substitute. Don't settle for an image of God. An image is a shadow of the real thing.

## 2. IT WILL DELIVER ME -- freedom

The bible says you will experience freedom like you've never felt if you will put God in first place in your life. Incredible freedom.

Jesus said, "If you obey my teaching you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

"If the Son sets you free, you will be really free."

Why is it when I put God first in my life and in my family it sets my family free?

1) I no longer have to worry about the approval of other people because I'm only focusing on pleasing God. I don't have to please 30 people -- you can't. "God, I'm going to live for an audience of One. You're number one in my life and I will focus on doing what You say because that will always be the right thing." It's so relaxing. It sets you free from the expectations and approval of others.

2) It sets me free. You're set free from your past. I've been completely forgiven. I don't carry those regrets any more. I'm set free in the present, I have a new power to break the habits I couldn't break on my own. I'm free in the future, I'm not afraid of dying, I know where I'm going. I'm free in the past, present, and future. That is real freedom.

3) It will develop me. When I put God first in my life it develops me, it helps me develop my potential, become the unique person God met for me to be in the first place. You will become like what you love.

"As the spirit of the Lord works with us, we become more and more like Him." Whatever you love you're going to become like. Whatever you worship you're going to become like. If you love money you're going to become materialistic. If you worship yourself, you're going to become more selfish. If you worship Christ, love Christ, you're going to become like Him. That's what God wants you to become. He wants you to develop the characteristics of Christ -- love, joy, peace and all the other characteristics of Jesus Christ.

It develops you to your full potential. You can't become all God wants you to be and your family can't be all you want it to be without putting Him first in your life.

Steve and Connie Rutenbar:

Steve: Connie and I moved to Mission Viejo twelve years ago. If any of you were around at the time you couldn't ride the freeway, open the Register or LA Times without seeing an advertisement from the Mission Viejo company that said "come live the California promise" that ad was designed for the Rutenbar family. We bought into it entirely. We bought a home, started up a business, began our family and God blessed us with three wonderful children. We started living and seeking after the California promise.

We didn't at that time consider ourselves idol worshipers by any means. But according to Rick's definition, we're going to have to adjust that. We were definitely an idol worshiper. I and Connie and trusted in the Lord early in our lives in our childhood. We had grown up in Christian families that honored the Lord. We had met each other at a Christian University and married at that time. The problem for me was not knowing God's word -- I had been taught God's word and sought out and understood God's word. The problem for me personally was applying God's word and knowing how to apply it.

In about 1983 when our second child Kyle came along we really together began to question whether the California promise was all it was cracked up to be. We began to see a lot of our neighbors and friends falling apart at the seams. It was frightening to me personally to see dear friends of ours and

their marriages splitting up. It was during that crisis and questioning period in our lives that a friend of ours told us about a little church that was at that time meeting over at Laguna Hills High School and this pastor Rick Warren who was teaching each Sunday about how to apply God's word into your life. So after not really going to church for a number of years we decided to go and give this church a try. It was amazing to me how God's word just filled my heart. It really hit me like an arrow which struck out from this pulpit into the middle of my heart. Over the next weeks I couldn't believe how anxious I was to come back the next week and hear God's message taught because it hit me so personally. There were a number of times I accused Connie of calling Rick up during the week and giving him all our personal secrets. I felt he was writing his sermon about me, it was that personal.

It was during those weeks and months ahead that lights began to come on in our lives. We began to try in baby steps to practice the habits of the Christian life and walk the Christian life and God of course encouraged us as a parent encourages a child.

Another huge turning point came three years ago when after months of discussion, Connie and I decided to sell our businesses and go into full time service and we were really seeking where God would have us serve and he led us miraculously to this church to begin serving full time. I really struggled personally during that time. I am a son of a minister and for 37 years I've struggled with this concept: If I can't preach the way my dad preaches I'm really not fit for ministry or if I can't communicate the way Pastor Rick communicates how could I call myself a minister. Wonderfully over the last three years Jesus has taught me and taught us that His requirement for ministry is not for me to be like Rick or my dad; He wants me to be just the way He created me.

God gave me spiritual gifts like no other person. He gave me a passion and abilities and a personality and life experiences that are like nobody else. That has taken tremendous guilt off me and really let me be Steve Rutenbar. I don't have to be like Billy Graham or anybody else.

It's been wonderful over the last few years to see the transformation in our family from following after the California dream and the California promise and begin to follow God's promises in life.

Connie: As we try to do that we're learning as we go and we're raising our three children seeing what a difference it makes

putting Christ at the center of our lives. We can try to teach them from what we've learned over the last few years but then we realize that they really learn by our example to them.

That's what really keeps us on our toes and we work together on it.

Our kids are our number one ministry right now, our family. We enjoy serving in other areas of the church also but the first priority is our family. We see how God affects that. Three things came to my mind that really helps out in that situation. One, we can pray for our family and even when we make mistakes we know that God is always there caring for each one of us. The second thing is, that I don't have to worry. I love my family so much and yet I don't have to worry day to day because I know that God is in control and His love is much more than I could ever give them. And then, I'm so glad that we're following God's rules and not our own rules as parents, because we'd hate to have to set that perfect example for our kids that Christ has already set for us. It makes it so much easier when we put Christ first and realize that it is His rules that we're following. We can study the Bible and go to church together. Steve and I teach the kids and work on together trying to learn what is important in life, what we've learned being in business and what is important in people. It's wonderful being here at the church to see how we can show our kids what is important in people and how we can serve them and then what is important in the things we have and how we use them.

It is not easy building a family on God's values when everything else in society is saying "These are the values you ought to idolize" as in the California promise. Some of you are saying "I'm Christian and our home is Christian. We don't have any idols in our home." You might have them in your heart. You can have internal idols or external idols. Most of us don't have little statues hanging around that we bow down to. They are not idols of metal but they are mental idols.

How do you imagine God as relates to your life is a question you need to settle. Is it the image that God wants me to have or is someone else's image of God? Some people have an image of God as an unpleasable parent, that God sets up there and if you get straight A's and one B, He says, "That's not good enough." Some people have an image of God as an angry step-parent who doesn't want you around and couldn't care less about your life. There are others who have an image of God as a feeble grandparent who lets you get away with murder because he couldn't stop you if he

wanted to. All of those are false images. All of those are idols. God wants you to know Him as He really, really is.

So what is God really like? How do I know what God is really like. God wants you to know Him and He wants you to know it so clearly that He came to earth in human form so we could know what He is like. Two thousand years ago He came to earth so we could relate to Him in the form of Jesus Christ. I can't relate to some big spirit in the sky. When I look at Jesus I can say, "that is what God is like."

"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God." Do you want to know what God is like? It's real simple. Look at Jesus.

One day a guy named Philip came to Jesus and said, "Show us what God is like, show us the Father." Jesus said, "If you've seen Me you've seen the Father." It's that clear. When you look at Jesus and His life that's how you get to know God. He came to earth. If he wanted to communicate to ants He would have become an ant. If He wanted to communicate to dogs, He would have become a dog. But He wanted to communicate to people so He became a person. You get to know God by getting to know Jesus Christ.

So in building this family, a strong family that's going to last, building a strong personal life, you've got to settle these first two issues.

One, put God first in every area of your life and two, today, get to know the real image of God by getting to know Jesus Christ. If you haven't done that I challenge you and urge you to get to know Him today. Just pray a simple prayer, "Jesus Christ I want to know you. Come into my life. I want to follow you as best I know how." Trust Him for Who He is.

ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES  
Ten Values That Build Strong Families - Part 2  
Exodus 20:4-5  
Rick Warren

Exodus 20:4-5 (LB) "You shall not make any idols ... you must never bow to an image or worship it in any way."

2 Principles

I. DON'T `IDOLIZE' ANYTHING!

"Idolize" - to \_\_\_\_\_ something more than God.

"For your own good ... don't sin by making an idol in any form at all."

Deut. 4:15-16 (GN)

Why?

1. Idols will \_\_\_\_\_

"...those who make idols are disillusioned because the gods they make are false and lifeless."

Jer. 10:14 (GN)

"What's the use of an idol? It's only something a man has made. What good does it do ... to trust it?"

Hab 2:18 (GN)

2. Idols will \_\_\_\_\_

"... (before you knew Christ) you were controlled by dead idols, who always led you astray." I Cor. 12:2 (GN)

3. Idols will \_\_\_\_\_

"Those who make idols will become like them, and so will those who trust in them."

Ps. 115:8 (GN)

"They worshiped worthless things and became worthless themselves."

Jer. 2:5 (GN)



## II. WORSHIP ONLY GOD!

"Worship" -- to give my highest \_\_\_\_\_

"(Many) exchange the truth about God for a lie; they worship and serve what God has created instead of the Creator himself!"

Rom. 1:25 (GN)

### The Benefits of Worshiping Only God

1. IT \_\_\_\_\_

"Seek your happiness in the Lord and He will give you your heart's desire.

Ps. 37:4 (GN)

"Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."

Rom. 10:11 (GN)

2. IT \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus said, "If you obey my teaching ... you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32

"If the Son sets you free, you will be really free."

John 8:36

3. IT \_\_\_\_\_

"As the Spirit of the Lord works with us, we become more and more like Him."

2 Cor. 3:18b (LB)

"We arrive at maturity -- that measure of development which is meant by `the fullness of Christ.'" "

Eph 4:13-15 (Ph)

"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God."

Col. 1:5