

**BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE®**

KJV ADULTS
Personal Study Guide

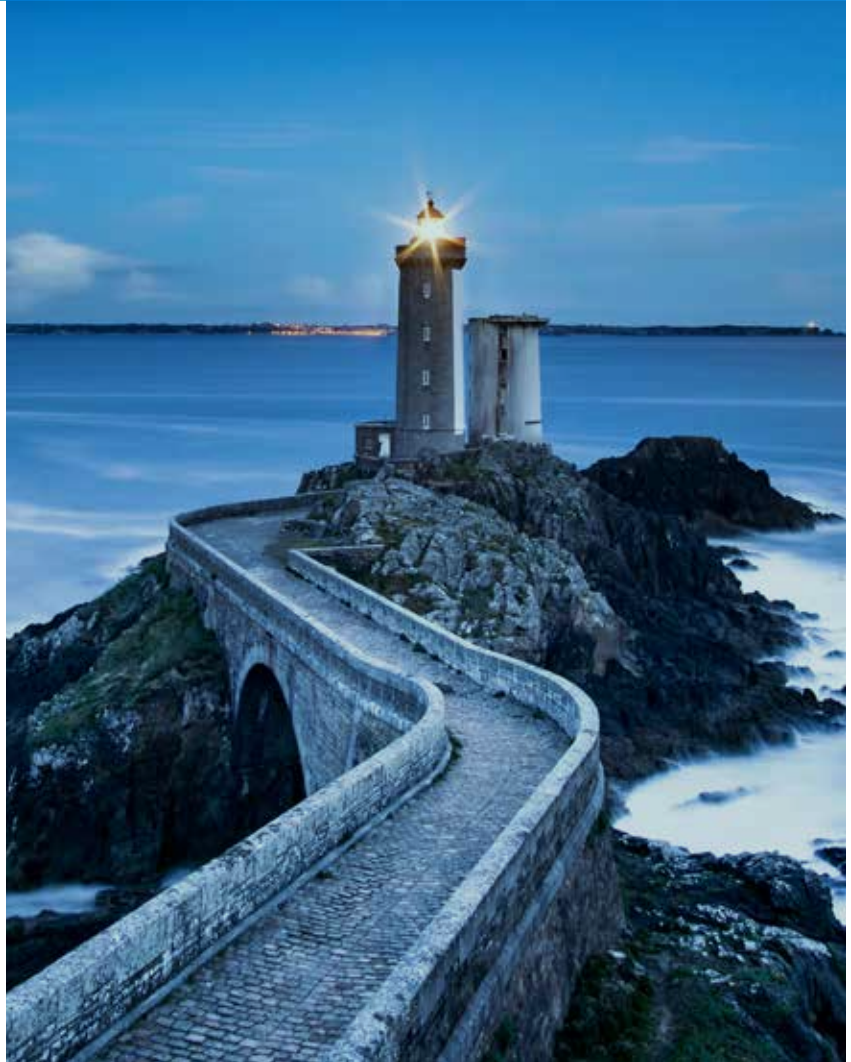
FALL 2020

STUDY 1:

*After God's Own
Heart: A Fresh
Look at the Ten
Commandments*

STUDY 2:

*All In: A Life
of Commitment*



LifeWay | Adults

GOD'S UNFAILING PROMISE

We've messed up. You have. I have. We all have. And no matter our good intentions or efforts, we can't make up for the wrong we've done.

The Bible uses a much stronger word—sin—to describe the ways we have not lived according to God's perfect standard. The result of our sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

Thankfully, we do not have to stay in this condemned state. In spite of our sin and rebellion against God, He loves us and made a way for us to be forgiven and receive a new, eternal life freed from the consequences of our sin. The solution is in Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty of our sin and brokenness with His own death (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). When we turn away from our sin in repentance and turn to Him in faith, Christ gives us a new life, freed from the penalty of sin. We are made new in Him (2 Cor. 5:17).

God's unfailing promise—His commitment to us— is the best guarantee we can be offered. "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

To receive a new life in Christ, you can pray a prayer like this:

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross to forgive me of my sins and rose from the dead to give me new life. I'm sorry for all the wrong I've done and ask You to forgive me. I now accept Your gift of eternal life. Thank You for Your love, forgiveness, and a new life in Jesus Christ. From this day forward, I choose to follow You. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Share your decision to follow Jesus with a pastor or those in your Bible study group. Be baptized as an expression of your faith. Get involved in a church that will help you grow in your faith.

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Bible Studies for Life
KJV Adults Personal Study Guide

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still appropriate before sharing them with
participants, friends, and family.

WELCOME

Fall. It's my favorite time of the year. Football returns. The nights are cool and crisp. The afternoons are warm. God gives us explosions of color as the leaves change. And don't forget Thanksgiving, one of my favorite holidays. I love the emphasis on family and friends.


And there's my other reason for loving fall—a new season of Bible study. In most churches, attendance rises as people return from summer vacations and settle back into more normal routines. I love it when I look up and see all the members of my Bible study group together again, ready to study God's Word.

The Bible Studies for Life team has created two excellent studies for us. I say "us" because I teach a *Bible Studies for Life* group at my church. Tony Evans wrote the first of our two fall studies. *After God's Own Heart* will give us a fresh look at the Ten Commandments. Just think how much better our lives and our society would be if we followed these commands daily. A second study by Matt Carter, *All In*, will challenge each of us to raise our level of commitment to Christ.

It's going to be a great fall! I'm glad we're going to experience these new studies together.

Ken Braddy

Director of Sunday School

 @kenbraddy | kenbraddy.com



MY GROUP'S PRAYER REQUESTS

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing prayer requests.

THE PATHWAY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Growing in Christ is a journey—a lifelong journey—but what does that look like? LifeWay’s research reveals eight markers consistently present in the lives of believers who are growing spiritually. Each year, Bible Studies for Life engages all eight of these areas. Following this intentional plan for discipleship ensures progress on the pathway to becoming more like Christ.

Visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com for a fuller picture of this discipleship plan through 2022.

8 MARKERS	FALL 2020	WINTER 2020-21	SPRING 2021	SUMMER 2021
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS	After God’s Own Heart: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments			
SEEK GOD	All In: A Life of Commitment			
OBEY GOD AND DENY SELF		When Emotions Rise		
ENGAGE WITH SCRIPTURE		Spiritual Disciplines: Becoming More Like Jesus		
EXERCISE FAITH			The Essentials of Christianity	
SHARE FAITH			How to Share Christ	
LIVE UNASHAMED				Walking in Confidence
SERVE GOD AND OTHERS				Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts

AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART: A FRESH LOOK AT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan:

Build Relationships. We have no greater way to build good relationships than what we find in the Ten Commandments God provided. In the briefest and clearest of statements, God has revealed the way to relate to Him and others.

- Session 1 **Place God First** (Exodus 20:1-6; Psalm 16:1-4a,9-11)
- Session 2 **Honor God** (Exodus 20:7-11; Psalm 145:1-7)
- Session 3 **Honor Parents** (Exodus 20:12; 2 Samuel 15:7-14)
- Session 4 **Honor Life** (Exodus 20:13; 1 Samuel 26:7-11,22-25)
- Session 5 **Honor Marriage** (Exodus 20:14; 2 Samuel 11:1-5)
- Session 6 **Honor All Relationships** (Exodus 20:15-17; Psalm 37:1-6)

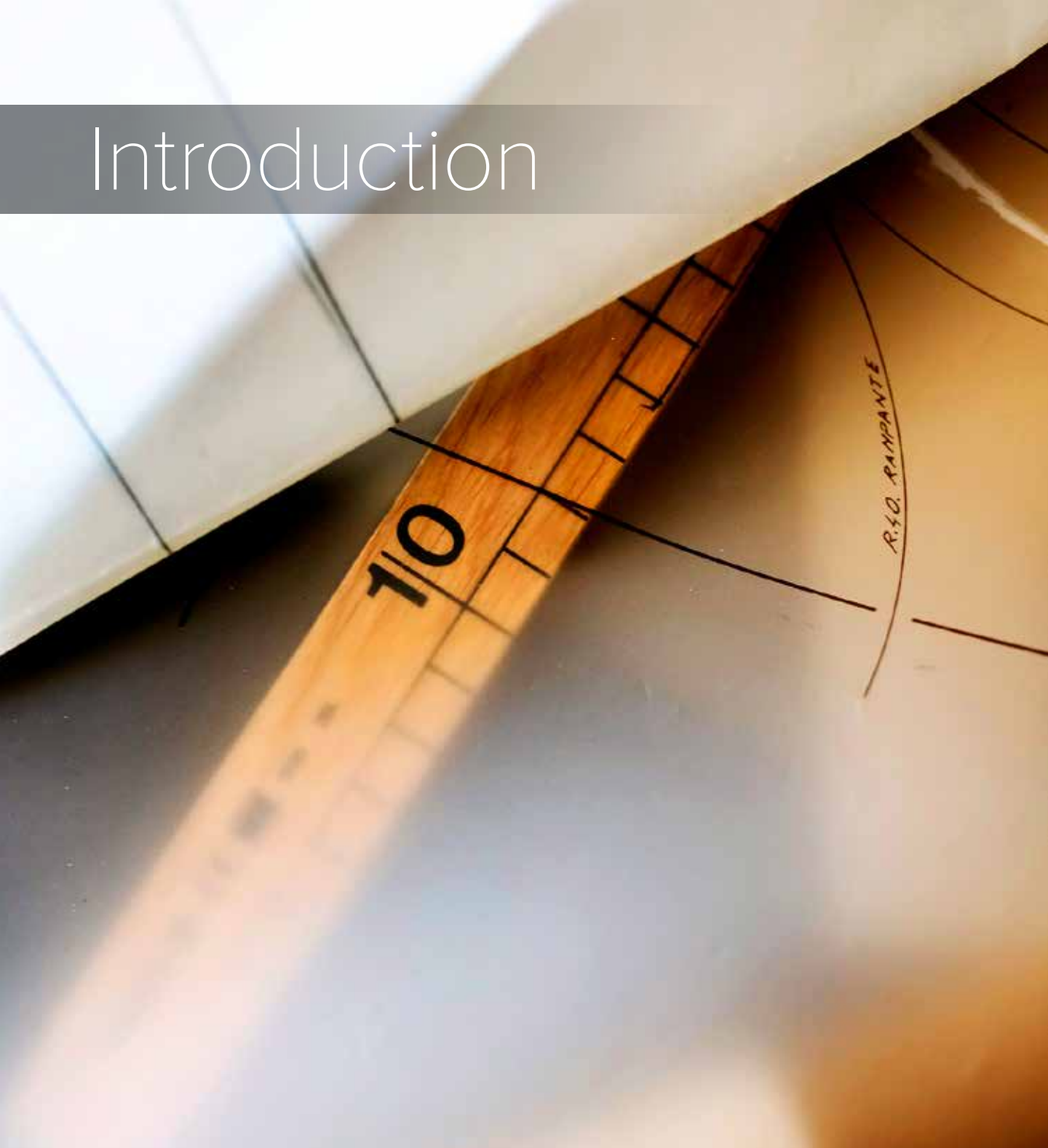
ALL IN: A LIFE OF COMMITMENT

How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan:

Seek God. Seeking God is not something we do casually or only when we feel like it. A full commitment to Christ means we intentionally and continually seek after God and the things of God. As we deepen our walk and commitment to Christ, it only deepens our desire to seek Him, know Him, and please Him.

- Session 1 **Christ's Commitment to Us** (Romans 5:6-12,18-21)
- Session 2 **Our Commitment to Christ** (Mark 10:13-22)
- Session 3 **Committed to His Word** (Psalm 119:1-11)
- Session 4 **Committed to His Church** (Romans 12:3-16)
- Session 5 **Committed to Pray** (Colossians 1:3-12)
- Session 6 **Committed to His Worship** (Psalm 99:1-9)
- Session 7 **Committed to His Mission** (Romans 10:9-17)

Introduction



AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART: A FRESH LOOK AT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Ethics and morals have become skewed in our world today. People want to live life on their own terms, but God has given us a succinct and clear path to follow through the Ten Commandments. Unfortunately, too many people see these Commandments as a negative list of don'ts, but obeying these Commandments leads to a rich and full life.

Jesus distilled the Ten Commandments down to love for God and others (Matt. 22:37-40). When we live lives of Christ-centered love, we will be living out the heart of the Ten Commandments.

We're going to take a fresh look at the Ten Commandments. We're not going to focus so much on the things we're not to do, but we will see what obedience frees us to do and be in Christ. Along the way, we're going to look at David, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), as his life serves as the backdrop for a greater understanding of just how to live a life pleasing to God.

TONY EVANS

Tony is senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship and president of The Urban Alternative. He's been preaching for over fifty years and can be heard on the radio broadcast, *The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans* (www.tonyevans.org).

SESSION 1

Place God First



QUESTION 1:

When has a simple solution taken you by surprise?

THE POINT

God is to have first place in every aspect of life.

THE PASSAGES

Exodus 20:1-6; Psalm 16:1-4a,9-11

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Have you ever felt disappointed? Frustrated? Hurt? Confused? We all have. Life comes with issues—and these issues can show up in so many ways. When enough issues arise, life begins to feel like one big mess.

A man visited a doctor because his entire body hurt. From the top of his head to the bottom of his feet, he felt pain. Every single place he touched brought great pain to him.

The doctor looked him over and said, “Well, this is odd. I don’t see anything wrong.”

He proceeded to ask the man to touch different places on his body. Each time the man touched a different place on his body, he cried out in pain.

After a few minutes of this, the doctor diagnosed the problem. “Sir,” the doctor said, with a bit of a sigh, “You have a dislocated finger.”

While it felt like everything was wrong, only one thing was wrong. It’s true for our lives as well. Even though it may seem like everything in life is a mess, the solution comes down to three words: Put God first. This one action affects everything.

Exodus 20:1-6

- 1** And God spake all these words, saying,
- 2** I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
- 3** Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
- 4** Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.
- 5** Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;
- 6** And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

We are to put God first because He alone is God. That statement covers much more than we may realize. Most of us would say, “God is first in my life,” but is He? For some people, what is “first” in their lives is money, pleasure, social media, sports, a person, or a special possession. Unfortunately, these “firsts”—things placed preeminently above all else—run rampant in our society. When we give anyone or anything the devotion and worship God alone deserves, the Bible describes that with one word: idolatry.

True, in our culture most of us don’t bow down to idols or statues made of wood or stone. We don’t declare our allegiance through rituals or sacrifice. And while the absence of those outward things is good, it can also be misleading. Because we don’t physically and tangibly bow to sports, pleasure, politics, social media, a person, or special possessions, we can naïvely think they are not idols. We still can mistakenly believe that God is first in our lives. Yet countless idols exist in our culture. An idol is any person, place, thought, or thing that usurps God’s rightful place in our lives.

QUESTION 2:

Where do you see examples of idols in a typical home in our culture?

God calls us to devote ourselves to Him first because He alone is God. In Him alone is found true life, both in this world and in the world to come. As King, He sits over all. He rules over all. He governs all. The agenda of God's kingdom is the visible manifestation of His rule over every area of life. God's rules stand apart from the rules of other kings and leaders. God's rules are not rooted in power, manipulation, or greed; God's rules are rooted in His love. As 1 John 4:19 states, "We love him, because he first loved us." He calls us to love Him because we are loved by Him. Jesus gave us two straightforward commands: Love God and love others (Mark 12:29-31). Every other law or directive given by God is summed up in those two commands. This is because loving God first includes aligning all of life under His kingdom rule.

To put Him first in our lives is to live a life punctuated by a love that stems from a spirit of gratitude. Many who study or preach on the Ten Commandments skip the important opening verses of Exodus 20. Before God gave the Ten Commandments, He first reminded the Israelites what He had done for them. "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Before God handed down any commands, He reminded the Israelites of the redemption and freedom He had provided. Their gratitude to Him for what He had done was to serve as their foundation for putting Him first. Not fear. Not bondage. Not mandated worship. No, in the context of gratitude for the freedom He gave them, God was calling them to honor Him first.

He does the same for us today. Required worship is not worship. Mandated honor is not honor. Outward obedience does not always serve as an indicator of authentic honor. When God asks us to put Him first, He's asking for our hearts. If we give Him our hearts, He knows our actions will follow.

QUESTION 3:

*How do things in our lives become idols?***Psalm 16:1-4a**

1 Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

2 O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee;

3 But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.

4a Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god:

When David said “my goodness extendeth not to thee,” he wasn’t making a blanket statement that everything was terrible. Rather, he was highlighting an important distinction: God alone is good. Thus, God alone is the originator of all else that is good as well. Based on this truth, we know two things:

1. Good has one source: God.
2. If something is not good, it does not come from God.

I didn’t say if something doesn’t “seem” good, it does not come from God. A lot of things may not “seem” good to us, but God uses them to usher in good (Gen. 50:20). Yet because of our limited, finite understanding, Satan seeks to use these things to plant doubt in our hearts concerning God’s goodness. The devil does this in a number of ways.

1. In trials or difficulties, Satan wants us to focus on the pain rather than the purpose. Satan sought to confuse Paul by giving him a “thorn in the flesh” to torment him. Paul could have blamed God for the difficulty rather than looking to God in the midst of the difficulty. He could have turned his back on God and sought his own solution, but Paul chose to look

to God for wisdom in his suffering. Paul received the good that God intended: the perfecting of strength in his weakness (2 Cor. 12:6-10).

2. Satan seeks to plant doubts about the goodness of God by tempting us to develop a “victim mentality.” He attempted this with Job by striking down and destroying all the people and things Job loved and cherished, and then wreaking havoc on Job’s health. Job’s wife urged her husband to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). She wanted Job to wallow in self-pity. She prodded him to cast blame on God. Yet Job remained steadfast, ultimately trusting in the goodness of God (42:1-6). As a result, “the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before” (v. 10).

Like Paul and Job, what we experience may not always feel good or seem good. But Scripture assures us that *all* things will be used for good when we love God and put Him first (Rom. 8:28-29). God’s power and might can turn any table and flip any script toward His intended purposes of good. But the promise in Romans 8:28-29 doesn’t apply to every situation. It applies to those “that love God” and live “according to his purpose.” Translation: It applies to those who put God *first*. Why wouldn’t we want to put God *first*?

James tells us, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jas. 1:17). God is the source of all good. The original term for *cometh down* is a present participle; this means that the “good and perfect” gifts God gives us are *continually* flowing to us.

Whether it is the oxygen we breathe, the food we eat, the ability of our bodies to function, or the rain that nourishes the earth, God never pauses from giving good things to us. Have you ever thought about what would happen if God suddenly chose to clock out and take a ten-minute break? Even if it were just for a moment, our world would unravel.

Remember: if something is good, its source is God. If something does not “seem” good, the source may still be God. Even when we encounter something that truly is not good (evil), it should only cause us to recognize the goodness of God all the more. After all, a brilliant diamond sparkles the brightest against the backdrop of a dark cloth.

QUESTION 4:

When are you most tempted to put your trust in something besides the Lord?

Psalm 16:9-11

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

KEY WORD: Hell (Ps. 16:10)— The Hebrew term (*sheol*) refers to the abode of the dead (the underworld, “the pit,” “the grave”), where it was believed everyone went after death. Even so, God is there (Ps. 139:8).

Most of us go through our lives hoping we know where we are going. We spend money on fancy apps to help us navigate through the maze of life. Try visiting a foreign country or a location where road construction is taking place, however, and you can no longer depend on your apps. You’ll quickly discover how important it truly is to know the way to where you are going. This principle certainly applies to where we are going in our lives—and for eternity.

David knew that “the path of life” was God Himself. God showed him (and us) the path of life on earth through His guidance and directions. In another psalm David said, “I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways” (Ps. 119:14-15).

God’s way is not merely *one* of the ways to choose from in life. God’s way is *the only way* that leads to both full “joy” in the present and “pleasures for evermore” beyond time. Jesus described the importance of knowing the way and choosing God’s way when He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Jesus doesn’t just know the way; He *is* the way. He is our GPS and the location we seek *is* Him.

When we remain in Jesus and align ourselves under Him (John 15:1-8), He takes us where we need to go. He opens those doors we didn’t even have the ability to knock on previously. He overcomes the obstacles our emotions may have dug up. He calms the seas that looked too difficult to face on our own. He is the way to abundant life on earth (John 10:10) and He is the way to eternal life (3:16).

Eternal life is a gift we receive by placing faith alone in Christ alone for the payment of our sins. That’s why the gospel is called “good news.” The good news of the gospel is that we don’t have to pay for any of it. Jesus is the way. He is the gift.

I run across far too many people who, when I ask why God should allow them into heaven when they die, say because they have kept the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were never given as an entry point for eternity. While it’s true that God expects us to obey His commands, the ultimate purpose of the law is to show us our inability to keep those laws. In other words, it reveals our need for a Savior (Rom. 7:7).

God has allowed a permanent sacrifice—Jesus Christ—to substitute for the punishment each of us deserves. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21). God

initiated a “credit transfer.” He took the perfect credit of Jesus’ righteousness and transferred His perfect credit score to each of us who receives it through faith in Him.

Does this mean we are to ignore and shun righteous living, as well as the commands of God? I’ll let Paul answer that: “God forbid” (Rom. 6:2). But it does mean that we have been set free from legalism and condemnation through the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. This allows us to willingly and gratefully pursue a life pleasing to God by placing Him first over everything else.

QUESTION 5:

What are some ways our group has helped you discover God’s path for your life?

ENGAGE

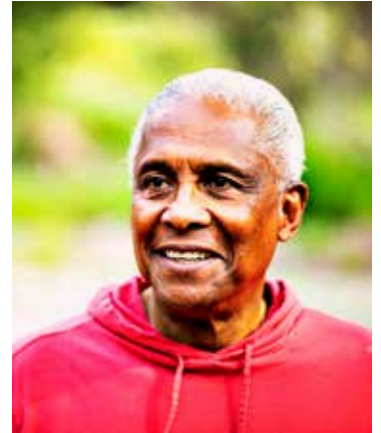
Rank the following areas of your life in priority of importance. Place a percentage afterward to indicate how much of your time you spend on these areas. After some evaluation, write on a sheet of paper a prayer of commitment to God to put Him first.

Priority	Area	Percentage
_____	Work	_____
_____	Family	_____
_____	Friends	_____
_____	Pleasure	_____
_____	Rest	_____
_____	Church	_____
_____	God	_____

LIVE IT OUT

How will you actively seek to put God first in your life?

- ▶ **Acknowledge.** The starting point for any personal change begins with honestly acknowledging what needs to change. If you do not put God first in any area in your life, confess that to God. Ask for His forgiveness and help in putting Him first in your thoughts, words, and actions.
- ▶ **Begin.** Make a commitment to begin each day by putting God first. You can develop the habit of putting God first more consistently by reminding yourself of this truth before you start your day. This will look different for each person, but it could mean saying a prayer when you first wake up, reading your Bible before you do anything else, or quoting a Scripture from memory before you pick up your phone in the morning.
- ▶ **Track.** Consider keeping a notepad or journal this week where you write down every time you sought to put God's perspective and His guidance first in your life. You may want to share this with a friend as a way to encourage your friend to do the same.





THE ATTRACTION OF IDOLATRY

By Randall L. Adkisson

In a village in central India, a man snuck away from his family. There he set for himself an idol, an image of his chief deity. Goli took a knife, sharp as a razor, and made long cuts into the flesh of his forearm. He lifted his arms; clasped his hands together; hovered them over the idol's form; and let his fresh, warm blood drain over his god.¹

A World Filled with Idols

Though perhaps a shock to modern sensibilities, idol worship is still common

Archaeologists unearthed a large number of eye idols at Tell Brak in modern northern Syria; so many that they dubbed the location the “Eye Temple.” The purpose of the figures is unclear. Some suggest the idols represent worshipers, who would be looking continually to the god, even in the absence of the actual people who left the objects. Others believe the objects represent the gods themselves. These examples come from northern Syria and date to about 3500 BC.

today. In villages, towns, and cities—in homes, fields, caves, and on mountains, men and women bow before shrines to honor gods made by hands.

Genesis first mentions the prevalence of idol worship in reporting Rachel stole and hid her family's idols (Gen. 31:19). The tone of the story seems to indicate idolatry was not uncommon. In the Old Testament period, people often recognized national, regional, and individual gods and their idol forms.

Idol worship was a constant temptation for God's people. Neither warnings nor severe punishment broke them of the idol's lure. On Sinai Moses acquired the Law from God, a primary one stating, "You shall not make for yourself an idol" (Ex. 20:4).² In the camp below, the newly freed Israelites degraded themselves before an idol constructed by Moses' brother (32:2-4). The lure of idol worship was not limited to ancient Israel. Idolatry was a constant draw that enticed God's people—although to a lesser extent after the exile. The Jews ultimately found

the will to turn completely from idol worship during the intertestamental period.

Idol worship was ubiquitous in the Gentile world of the New Testament. Long-established deities had their place in the temples of Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. To these the first century added new images of worship—images of Roman rulers and the national religions. The New Testament church faced idol worship as a barrier to their witness and an enticement to their membership. Images of the gods were hot-selling items in the marketplaces of the New Testament world. Paul faced craftsmen's wrath when several people responded to his preaching in Ephesus. The artisans accused Paul of cutting into their ability to market their images and of threatening their profits (Acts 19:23-41).

What Was the Attraction of Idols?
Individuals desire to be "normal," to be perceived by others as part of typical society. Readers today may not understand how far from normal were the demands of God and therefore

the people of God. Every group of people with whom Israel came into contact believed in multiple gods and practiced idol worship. These people believed every need of life was under the watch of some god or the other. Procreation of livestock, fields, and family was assured based upon the favor of a god.

Israel often succumbed to the lure of the land in which they resided, whether Egypt, Babylon, or Canaan. Interaction with the surrounding peoples through trade, marriage, and government could not help but entwine God's people with idols. As today, influence of culture and family too easily swayed the people of God.

Another draw to idol worship was its simplicity of form and promise of results. According to one Old Testament scholar, pagan idolatry was attractive to the ancients because it was based on an assumption that frequency and generosity of worship (bringing a lot of food to an idol's shrine) would establish a good relationship with one's god or goddess. ethical living was not required.³

Idolatry that required simple forms of payment and ritualistic worship rather than taxing demands of moral standards held a lure for sinful mankind. Numbers 25 shows the simplicity with which Israel could enter into idol worship and remain enmeshed with immorality.

Idols were pleasing, visibly and to the touch. Israel struggled to restrict their worship to a God whom no one could see or touch. Although people could experience Yahweh's presence in: (1) creation, (2) His moral obligations communicated through the Law, and (3) His personal intervention recorded in national history, they could not touch, handle, or see Him.

The allure of a god that could be handled, decorated, bowed to, and transported overcame for many the contradiction of worshiping an item created by the hands of the worshiper. Like present day charms, crystals, and amulets, the convenience and imminence of idols captured people's imaginations. Worshipers felt they could be assured of a god's presence if they could touch or see its image.

“Sex sells” was as true in the ancient world as it is today. Idol worship incorporated many forms of sexual vice. Craftsmen often shaped idolatrous symbols to resemble sexual organs or humans with exaggerated genitalia. Old Testament Scripture speaks of Asherah, a pole or tree representing a sex goddess. Greeks and the Romans worshiped Artemis and Diana, represented by a multi-breasted idol.

Because many forms of idol worship sought to assure the fertility of the soil and the womb, ritualistic sexual practices were often a part of pagan temple worship. People believed temple prostitution would excite the voyeuristic gods into procreative activities, which supposedly assured successful multiplication of earthy crops, herds, and people.

The images and language of the Old Testament often allude to the sexual nature of idol worship. The prophets’ words of whoring, adultery, and chasing after the gods of the pagans are blunt and condemning. (see Hosea, Jer. 3:6b).

Still an Issue

Ancient Israel and the early church stood in danger of being seduced by the gratification and promises of gods that could be fashioned in the likeness of mankind. Judgment for their sin included corporal punishment, as well as the inherent loss of purpose, witness, and influence in their communities. The saddest form of judgment’s gavel was the loss of generations who watched the compromise of their parents and national leaders and followed them along paths of alienation from a relationship with their true God (Ex. 34:7).

Idol worship in many forms still permeates the land. Today false religions incorporate chants, talismans, and charms in worship. Images of gods reside in Hindu closets and new age shrines. Christians too have long been lured by horoscopes and good luck charms. Modern idols retain their attractions.

1. This story came from an experience I had with someone I met during an international mission trip to India.
2. All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Version (NASB).
3. Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 45.

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