

## The Ten Commandments.



**Word 2:      You shall not worship idols.      Exodus 20: 3**

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image” (Ex. 20:4). *The second commandment is necessary because people do not always keep the first. The Israelites made a golden calf to worship even as the Lord gave the laws to Moses. And since Israel had so many contacts with people who did worship images, including replicas of their earthly rulers, God gave them this law. God has never been a tangible, visible Being (Deut. 4:12), but always a Spirit (John 4:24). Idolatry therefore always misrepresents Him.*

Whilst the third commandment addresses the use of the Lord’s name, the second deals with the manner by which He is to receive our attention and affection.

Idolatry can take many forms, and it has persisted from the earliest times. Joshua 24:2 states that Abraham’s father served idols. Perhaps the earliest reference in the Bible to idols is the “household idols” or teraphim (small clay figurines) which Rachel stole from her father Laban (Gen. 31:34).

- 1      What might be described as idols today, and how do we worship them?

With the current fervour of the world cup, nationalism comes to the fore. God made us different and diverse. It is good to celebrate our culture and take pride in our nation, it might give us pride and purpose. But to an extreme, to have an idea that we are better than our neighbours simply because of where we were born can lead to trouble. Rwanda, Hitler’s Germany or the modern Balkans are an example.

- 2      How might events like the world cup be a good thing, and how might this be idolatry?

In the New Testament period the term idolatry began to be used as a spiritual concept. Idolatry became not the actual bowing down before a statue but the replacement of God in the heart or mind of the worshiper: “Put to death...covetousness, which is idolatry.” (See Col. 3:5; Eph. 5:5.)

Idolatry means making the means into the end itself, and also substitutes the thing for the person. That which is idolised takes the place of the living God.

- 3      What or where might we find idols within our church, why do we have them?
- 4      How do we distinguish between appropriate reverence, and making idols out of our worship (e.g. Bible, Communion, liturgy, etc)?

A practical definition of idolatry has been described as: "expecting from people or things what only God can give". Only God can satisfy our deepest needs. To expect satisfaction from any other source is idolatry. See Psalm 115:3-8.

- 5      What is Jesus’ teaching in John 4:19-24?

Jonah realised almost too late God’s love. Jonah 2:7-9.

Pray that we may honour God and only God. And that we can discern what the idols are in our lives, and how to deal with them.