

“The Big TEN ~ 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> commandments” 4.18.10

My great grand-father Jim Brook’s mother was a Cherokee Indian. Papa Jim was the spiritual patriarch of our family.

I would like to begin our time this \_\_\_\_\_ with a parable from the Cherokee nation, about TWO WOLVES.

“One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside all people. He said, ‘My son, the battle is between 2 wolves who live inside us all. One is EVIL ~ it is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, false pride & ego. The other is GOOD ~ it is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, & self – control.’ The grandson thought about it for a minute & then asked his grandfather: ‘Which of the WOLVES WIN?’ The old Cherokee simply replied, ‘THE ONE you feed.’”

Every year the lines become more blurry in our culture as it relates to what is Good & what is Evil.

National researcher George Barna has uncovered this TRUTH about our culture: even though the majority of Americans consider themselves to be Christian, only 5% hold to a biblical worldview.

Barna defines a biblical worldview as believing that moral absolutes exist: the source of absolute truth is the Bible; salvation is by grace alone; Jesus lived a sinless life; Satan is real & not just a symbol; God is the all knowing-powerful creator of universe. Only 5% Christians believe these basic tenants. Let’s say for the sake of argument that this statistic is low, let’s double it to 10% margin of error.

With that said how successful has the church’s mission been up until this point if less than 10% of Christ-followers hold a biblical worldview? This low impact must crush the heart of God’s!

Old scorecards that rate a church’s success by standard measurements such as: attendance, members & visitors satisfaction, dollars raised + built on square footage - doesn’t reflect the kind of radical shift in thinking & behavior that Jesus died to make possible. As long as we measure the church’s success on the basis of popularity & efficiency, with no regards to how YOUR thinking & behavior have changed, we will continue to see a nation filled w/people who can recite Bible stories, but fail to live according to Bible principles.

We want to teach this new series on the ‘Big Ten’ = ‘10 Commandments’ for a couple of reasons:

- One reason is we think we need it collectively as a nation. For several years our nation has kind of lost its moral equilibrium & we need some moral absolutes.
  - The U. S.A. was founded on biblical principles of right & wrong.
  - James Madison, the 4<sup>th</sup> President of our country said this, “We stake the future of this country on our ability to govern ourselves under the principles of the ‘10 Commandments.’”

Somewhere along the lines we allowed these timeless truths to be placed on a shelf:

INSERT Ted Koppel

- In the next few weeks we are going to review the basic moral code that God handed down to Moses at Mt Sinai.
  - The relevancy of these commandments is timeless. In them, we can gain a basic understanding of what God wants our lives to be.

- In the '10 Commandments' God has given us a clear, unchanging moral code that literally determines how we are to live.
- Collectively as a nation we need some moral absolutes. The Bible says, "Godliness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people." Proverbs 14:34
- BUT we are also we are teaching on the '10 Commandments' because it's apparent that the Church needs it personally.
  - If less than 10% of Christ-followers hold to a biblical worldview; WRCC has too be different.
  - I believe persecution of the church is eminently close; I believe that in the last days it will not matter what I have to say about the Bible, nor your trusted elders. The privilege of worship, the privilege of publicly studying God's word will not always be available.
  - You will have to know it personally - - or you & family will be in grave danger.
- My favorite part of the '10 Commandments' is...
  - It makes me appreciate God's grace all the more!
  - As I read the commandments = I'm overwhelmed with the impossibility of living up to these lofty expectation perfectly; no way to measure up.
  - By the straight-edge of the law I'm reminded how crooked our lives are;

We are saved only by the fact of Jesus death on the cross! The ONLY ONE to fulfill the requirements of the law by living perfectly!

- I. 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment = "You must not have any other god but Me."
  - A. (R) Exodus 20: 1 or 2<sup>nd</sup> book in the O.T.
    1. Notice God did not use angels nor prophets to deliver the '10 Commandments.'
      - a. God Himself spoke all these words!
      - b. God Himself wrote these '10 Commandments' on both sides of 2 tablets of stone.
      - c. According to Deuteronomy 10: 4 God Himself re-wrote the '10 Commandments' after the 1<sup>st</sup> set of tablets were smashed following the golden calf incident.
    2. Only speculation just maybe the greatest archeological discovery of all time is waiting to be found, possibly somewhere near the historical Mt Sinai in Saudi Arabia, broken stone tablets with God's handwriting may be found ☺
  - B. (R) Exodus 20: 2 – 3
    1. Ancient worshippers were not monotheistic - that is, believing in only one God. They were polytheistic - the more gods the better!
    2. They worshipped the god of the sun, the gods of the moon & stars, gods & goddesses of nature, war, fertility, financial, prosperity, & partying.
    3. Today a common definition of polytheism 'multiple gods' is defined as what their worshippers depend on for life = whatever gives people life, significance, & security is their god.
      - a. Martin Luther once wrote, "...whatever a man loves, that is his god."
      - b. John Calvin wrote, "...we all invent idols in infinite number."

- C. Truth is we humans are still into mis-directed worship; we still follow after other gods that operate under different aliases
1. It's critical to identify the 'gods' we have accidentally set up in our lives, know what they look like & once recognized for us to tear them down in our heart.
  2. Here is a short list of some of the gods we learn to worship early on:
    - a. One of the 1<sup>st</sup> gods most of us learn to worship is SELF.
      - i. We become our own idol, worshipping the trinity of ego: me – myself – and I.
      - ii. Our entire existence begins to orbit around self. What's in it for me? What makes me look good? What gives me pleasure? A self-centered mentality is essentially self-worship. What will make me comfortable is always the 1<sup>st</sup> question.
      - iii. These type of self-absorbed questions dethrone the truth, discard the facts, & obscure reality!
      - iv. Operating on feelings causes people to jump out of marriages; bail out of responsibilities, turn their backs on intimacy w/God!
    - b. Another god we choose to worship is PLEASURE.
      - i. You ever find yourself day-dreaming about your next escape ~ rushing your children to one activity to another ~ ever daydream about that next thrill = next escape etc.
      - ii. Most of us are obsessed with the pursuit of pleasure.
      - iii. Don't misunderstand this doesn't mean that God doesn't want us to experience pleasure, He created us to enjoy ourselves, the fruit of our labor; BUT each pleasure has its perimeters
      - iv. Ask yourself this question: "Has my hobby become a god for me? Is this recreational pursuit driving my desires more than my desire to please God? IF SO, time to readjust-tear idol down!

There are unlimited gods that take our worship away from God almighty:

- c. Multiple 'gods' that we worship alongside of God = gods of stuff-possessions + gods of sports + gods of superstition, burying idols in a yard of the house you want to sell + fearful not to walk under ladders, or if a black cat walks in front of you actually turn around, superstitious of Friday 13<sup>th</sup>.
- d. Such superstitions are left handed acknowledgements of other spirits that have power over our lives.

God says = "You must not have any other god but Me."

II. 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment = "You must not make for yourself an idol of kind"

- A. False idols are not only made of wood & stone, they normally are formed 1<sup>st</sup> in our minds.

1. There is a fine line between ART and 'iconic IDOLS'
  - a. Beautiful artwork + paintings + stained glassed windows help illuminate the biblical story.
  - b. In our living room hangs a copy of Rembrandt's depiction magnificent of the 'Prodigal Son.'
  - c. The line between ART & 'iconic IDOLS' is very distinct = not blurry

The problem enters when we begin to think these objects actually represent God; according to scripture this is impossible:

John 4: 24 = "...for God is Spirit"

Not to be formed or fashioned by human hands.

2. Even God's good qualities can distort our image of Him if they become the image of God we worship. Here's an example from scripture;

- a. 1<sup>st</sup> = Numbers 21: 4 – 9 or p. 123 in pew Bible
- b. 2<sup>nd</sup> = II Kings 18: 1 – 4 or p. 298 in pew Bible

Taken the brass serpent that had once been the symbol of God's healing power; several years later it had become a 'Cult god' that they worshipped instead of God ☹

B. (R) Exodus 20: 5

1. Think about one of your favorite attributes of God.
  - a. Merciful + gracious + unbreakable-unchangeable-always faithful
  - b. Too many to re-count
2. Troubling image = "...for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God."
  - a. My love for my wife is an exclusive love = I will not share Becky's affection with another man; her love is exclusively just for me.
    - i. Is this selfish? Is it controlling?
    - ii. Maybe, depends on how you choose to define it.
    - iii. For us Becky and I made a promise before God to exclusively love and adore one another.
    - iv. Am I jealous of her ~ for her, YES. I don't want another man getting the special attention and love she offers just me.
    - v. Oddly this jealousy is a protection for both us! It keeps us from getting ourselves into another emotional triangle that will only harm us at the end of the day!
  - b. Now God's jealousy is deeper than that. He wants us to be devoted to Him exclusively for our benefit.
    - i. God knows that when we go chasing after other gods we will be disillusioned & we will be hurt.
    - ii. The word jealous means God defend His priority in our lives. Connection Card = My next step is to: Spend week quietly determining where God ranks among my own desires & self – made gods. I will make changes, drastic changes if needed.