

NO FALSE IMAGES

BORN TO GROW

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

STUDY 3

The Born to Grow series of leaflets is designed to give you a good basic understanding of what it is to be a Christian and how to live a powerful and effective Christian Life.

It consists of six sets:

Foundations	6 leaflets
First Principles	7 leaflets
Kingdom Living	8 leaflets
Apostle's Doctrine	12 leaflets
Ten Commandments	11 leaflets
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RULE

Exodus 20:4-6

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.

For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

This commandment forbids the worshipping of images. The worshipping of images is called idolatry.

Some have taken this commandment to mean that it is a sin for artists to make statues or paintings that visually represent anything in creation. Such an interpretation would also forbid photography, motion pictures and television. All such interpretations have missed the point.

The issue is not the creating of images for the purpose of communication or for the appreciation of beauty, it is the creating of images for the purpose of worship. Worship is the ascribing of worth or importance to something That is it is an act or attitude that gives worthship or importance to things or concepts

Idolatry, then, is the creating of images that have not come from God and are given life directing importance. Such image making is totally forbidden by this commandment.

Pagan religions personified their wrong concepts and made statues. Such idols were easy to recognise. Today, idolatry is more subtle but equally prevalent. Any statue, picture, or other form of image is merely an outward representation of a concept first formed in the mind. Such images become idols when they are bowed down to and served. That is to say idolatry is sin in the mind and heart.

reason

Scripture shows that idolaters damage the generations that follow them and derive their identity (their sense of who they are) from their idols.

Psalm 135:15-18

*The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.*

*16 They have mouths, but they do not speak;
Eyes they have, but they do not see;*

*17 They have ears, but they do not hear;
Nor is there any breath in their mouths.*

*18 Those who make them are like them;
So is everyone who trusts in them.*

Idolaters seek to live out their lives in the strength of their idols. They have lives limited by their own concepts, projections and imaginations. They have replaced the reality of God as the source of their life and identity with images derived from their own ideas.

The reason this commandment is needed as a rule in our lives is to check this seeking of identity from a source other than our Father God. Our Father God is the only source of

life and love meaning for us. It is only when we relate to Him in this way, that we find ourselves as real people. If we relate to anything else as a substitute (which is disobedience to the first commandment) it will only result in us becoming unstable in our lives, unreal in our thinking and insecure in our personalities.

Romans 1:20-25

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

REACTION

The human reaction to the loss of identity through having rejected or lost the reality of God's Fatherhood compels man to restore an identity for himself. This always works through image building (idolatry). This always fails. It is the source of much insecurity. Many problems related to self esteem arise from trying to build our own images rather than to yield and to allow God to lovingly teach us who we are in Him.

Idolatry takes many forms; however, most forms can be found with one or more of the following six categories:

- Cult Idolatry
- Ideological Idolatry
- Religious Idolatry
- Hero Worship
- Self Image Building.

Cult Idolatry

This includes the worship of personified false gods such as Astarte (Judges 2:13), Baal (Judges 2:13), Dagon (Judges 16:23), Molech (Leviticus 18:21) and so on. Most pagan societies have (or had) many such gods, usually represented in some form of statue or picture.

This also includes occultism and Satan worship in which supernatural power is ascribed to incantations, talismans (magic charms and images) and secret rituals.

Ideological Idolatry

This form of idolatry has as its image or idol an idea or “ism” that promises fulfilment to its followers. These include the following: Communism, Nationalism, Patriotism, Denominationalism, Liberalism, Feminism, Capitalism, Environmentalism and so on. Some of these are generally regarded as being respectable and may even be important and of genuine value even before God. We should note that not all adherents to these ideologies are idolaters, they become idolaters when they look to these ideas for their sense of worth, their life fulfilment and for their identity.

Religious Idolatry

This is limiting God to our own concept of Him, and then worshipping these concepts. Israel did these in the worshipping of the golden calf (Exodus 32 cf. Deuteronomy 4:12), when they sought to enshrining their pitifully inadequate understanding of the Gods who had led them from Egypt. The calf worship was smashed by God because He has not prepared to be limited and misunderstood in this way.

In this, Israel showed their impatience in not waiting for God to progressively reveal Himself to them. Peter also fell in this by enshrining the Jewish religious tradition thus resisting God’s vision for the Gentiles. (Acts 10:9-16). Christians religious tradition often fails in the same way.

Hero Worship

In this form of idolatry, self identity is sought through identifying with the achievements, charisma and status of others such as sports champions, entertainers (rock idols), politicians and religious leaders.

Self-Image Building

This is the most widespread form of idolatry. In fact all the other forms of idolatry can be seen to be expressions of this basic problem. Self image building usually involves self rejection followed by self projection.

Self Rejection

Since all self-image building is establishing a false sense of identity it must involve rejection of our true selves. Self rejection often begins as a result of a parental lack in providing the attention and love so needed by their children¹. This is then usually reinforced and magnified by pressures such as those from peer groups etc. This causes feelings of inadequacy and inferiority and fears of disapproval and criticism. This self rejection does not always appear as inferiority but is almost as often seen in a false self assertiveness and superiority. This shows that even pride is a result of self rejection!

Self Projection

Self projection is the act of compensation for self rejection. Just as a film projector projects an image that covers a screen so we project from within ourselves an image that covers the self we have rejected. The nature of the image we project depends upon our life experience and our temperament. What has happened to us (our life experience) shapes what we want out of life, our temperament (whether it be of a negative or positive disposition) shapes the way we go about getting it. This projection of the image that would seem to fulfil our wants becomes a lifetime preoccupation. This distracts us and cuts us off from the true fulfilment of knowing who we are in God.

RESULT

The result therefore is a lifetime of insecurity as it becomes devoted to maintaining images that are shaky because they are founded in unreality.

Doubt must haunt any such image because it is but a shadow. To overcome this doubt, attempts must be made to substantiate the images. These attempts can only fail and so lead to disappointment. As hope dwindles disappointment becomes disillusionment and despair eventually overcomes.

REMEDY

There are three aspects of the remedy, rod revelation and release. The rod refers to the hand of God upon us in discipline. The revelation is that aspect of the truth which is in Christ that can set us free in each particular situation. The release is the living freedom that is experienced as the soul is set free to obey.

¹ Note here the statement made by the Lord qualifying this commandment. It seems likely that it is through this abuse of the family structure that God has ordained, that He “*visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation*”, and conversely shows mercy to those who honour Him.

ROD

God mercifully destroys any image that distracts us from knowing Him or our true selves. This often produces pain and insecurity in our lives. Sometimes it is God who is opposing us. In this sense God will oppose any false image we try to build. This means that sometimes the answer to our problems about self esteem and insecurity lie in giving up our ideas and efforts rather than in trying harder.

Isaiah 2:17-21

The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, And the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; The LORD alone will be exalted in that day, 18 But the idols He shall utterly abolish. 19 They shall go into the holes of the rocks, And into the caves of the earth, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty, When He arises to shake the earth mightily. 20 In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver And his idols of gold, Which they made, each for himself to worship, To the moles and bats, 21 To go into the clefts of the rocks, And into the crags of the rugged rocks, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty, When He arises to shake the earth mightily.

Revelation

What we must see to be free of the sin of idolatry in all its forms is the utter futility of trying to find security in our own identity. This is because our lives are hid with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:1-2

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

RELEASE

As we open our hearts to this revelation and let all idols perish in its life we become released into a place of secure self acceptance.

Self acceptance is the outworking of our faith in the grace of God through Jesus. In this we become able to rest in the fact that we are called and chosen by God without doing anything to deserve it. We no longer have an image to maintain. We are inescapably who we are, the handiwork of God, made in His image and likeness and brought into a place of blessed assurance of His love and interest in us.

Ephesians 1:3-6

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.