

The Subtle Gods We Serve

10 Ways to a Better Life series

by Chris Famisaran

Well, good morning, everybody. How are you all doing? You survived the week. Awesome. Welcome to all of our visitors who are joining us here for today, the first time today.

Let's go ahead and pray. God, we thank you for the opportunity to gather together as we begin a new series. Lord, ten ways to a better life. Lord, may this series impact us. Help us to draw closer to you and understand you better. In Jesus name, amen.

How many of you have ever used a rideshare app like Uber or Lyft? Okay, a good handful of you as you got into the car. Have you ever noticed anybody run multiple apps, for instance, driving wise, Google Maps, Waze, Apple Maps. Have you ever seen them run them at the same time? That would be crazy. Imagine yourself sitting in a car and your driver is using, let's say Google Maps or Waze. Maybe Google Maps will say, in 500ft, turn right. Or maybe Waze will also say in 300ft, turn left. And then your phone starts to choose, like, between which sources it'll go, turn, make, proceed. Or my favorite, recalculating, recalculating, recalculating. And then turn, make it proceed. Imagine your driver cannot make up their mind because they have two competing voices for this individual's attention. And eventually, maybe the car will start to drift into the lane. It'll speed up, it'll slow down. Maybe Google Maps will offer a longer but more predictable route. Waze, in my experience, maybe we'll try to get a shorter route, but you'll have to make a left turn where there's no turn signal. It'll maybe more quicker, but it may not necessarily be the most efficient. Maybe Waze will want to take shortcuts, side streets, rapid detours.

Of course, both apps recommend what they know. They have the best route. I disagree, because sometimes you never know. Traffic accident, anything can happen. And your driver is going back and forth. Which screen should I

depend on? Eventually you have two voices, two competing interests. Eventually somebody, one of those apps is going to take you on a wrong turn.

I remember I had to go and pick up my car and I was in an Uber and I was heading and I said, you need to make a left turn because otherwise if you stay on the right, you're going to get onto the other freeway and there's just like, you can't just get off and turn around and you'll be right there. And I was like, you need to turn left, you need to turn left. And this individual stayed in the right and we got on the wrong freeway. This was about 5:45. And I needed to show up before 6. We got there two minutes, whereas we should have got there within 14 minutes. Imagine the stress and anxiety that I experienced because I kind of needed my car. You ever been without your car for several days, maybe a week? You have to rent a car to drive while your car is in the shop. Oh, not an experience I want to relive.

And so you see, finally, a driver just pulled over, turned one of the apps off, proceeded on with one app, with one voice, one direction, having clarity. And you could see the body language of the driver relax. Suddenly the route is what? It's clear, it's consistent, there's no confusion. And the driver can what, drive with confidence. Right.

You know, in a world that is competing for our interest, Jesus says no one can serve two masters. Do we listen to God's voice or a competing voice? Where are our priorities or our impulses? Do we seek God's word or do we bow down to cultural pressure? Do we seek God's wisdom or do we turn to our fears? Each can give a different path, which ultimately can lead to two different destinations. Have you ever tried to second guess your apple? Have you ever felt torn inside? Have you ever lost clarity in the direction that you were headed towards?

Today I want to begin a new series called 10 Ways to a Better Life. And we're going to be looking at the Ten Commandments. How many of you suddenly died a little in your sigh? The Ten Commandments. Ten Commandments are buzzkill to my life because it's going to have to make me curb my desires, my intentions, or it's a roadmap to freedom and ultimately to relationship with God.

God, as we now begin, help us to understand, help us to find answers that you want us to know. Lord, the lessons we're about to impart, stick it in our heads, stick it in our soul, stick it in our heart, Lord, that not only that we may live a freer life with clarity, but ultimately more trust in you and to love our neighbor well. In Jesus name, Amen.

To even get into the Ten Commandments, which is located in Exodus 20, you actually need to go to Exodus 19. Should have thought of this earlier. So Exodus 19. Okay. Exodus 19. I didn't note it because I found after I realized, but kind of give you an overview, a preview, a context of where we are headed. You see, Prior to chapters 1 through 18 is a story of how Israel leaves Egypt. In fact, how did Israel begin to be in Egypt? If you go way back, even further in Genesis, Abraham And God meet God, reaches out to Abraham and say, I'm going to call you out of this area. And guess what? You're going to have many kids. And of course, we know Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, eventually Joseph, his son, gets over to Egypt, becomes prime minister, invites the whole family, and that's how they get to Egypt in a very, very quick way.

But the Israelites grew in number so fast that the Egyptians started to get a little leery. There's so many of them they could try to take over. Isn't what fear does to you without even talking. So what did they do? They enslaved them. And for roughly over 400 years, they were enslaved in Egypt. And finally, in Exodus, we learn of a man named Moses, little boy who escapes danger and eventually though, has to flee to the desert because he murders somebody. And yet, many years later, God calls him to go back and to bring his people out of Egypt.

So Moses, faithfully, but with fear and trembling, goes before Pharaoh a number of times. You have the 10 plagues, you have the whole story. And eventually Pharaoh relents. They leave. They get through the Red Sea. And it's here, roughly two to three months after they have left Egypt is where they're now back. Moses is back at Mount Sinai.

And we see that God has brought them through the Red Sea, the wilderness, and the difficult early trials that they've experienced. How are they going to eat water? How are they going to be led? And it's here that we see that at Mount Sinai is a place where Israel's identity is about to be formed. It's about

to be molded. Because here between Exodus 19:2, all the way through numbers 10, they don't move. God is speaking to them, or God is relaying messages to them that this is how you need to live. And in Exodus 19:3 through 6, we see that God proposes something, a covenant. So Moses ascends the mountain. God gives him the message. He goes back to the people. He shares the message with the people. And the message is this. Okay, let's actually, let's go to Exodus 19, verse 3. Exodus 19, verse 3. And it says, *Moses went up to God. Lord called him from the mountains and said, this is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you're to tell the people of Israel. You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. He's referring to how he brought them up out of Egypt. Now, if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all of the nations. You will be my what? Treasured possessions. Okay. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you were to speak to the Israelites.*

Okay. God says, I carried you on the eagle's wings and brought you to myself. We see that in the sense that God is graceful, God is redemptive. God called them out of Egypt, he rescued them and into a relationship. But we also see that there's also a sense of identity here, because then we also would be considered, what if we faithfully follow God, we are treasured possessions. We would also become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Nation that, when we say holy, is set apart. In a sense, God is preparing for Israel to be different, to be a magnet to. To the rest of the world, to be drawn to God.

And so we find in verses seven and eight, Moses goes down. He shares the message with the elders and the people, and their response is, all that the Lord has spoken. We're going to. What we're going to do. Now, those of you who've read ahead, do they faithfully follow everything that God says and does for them? No. They're going to have hiccups. They're going to have mountaintop experiences and valleys. But then God also prepares the people for his presence. He makes sure that, hey, consecrate yourselves, okay? Wash your clothes. Respect the boundaries around this mountain. Do not cross it. Cause if you do, what, you're gonna die.

And then God descends on Sinai in verses 16 through 20. And God is powerful and wonderful. There's thunder, there's lightning, there's a huge cloud. There's a trumpet blast. There's smoke, there's fire, there's an earthquake. And we see on display the majesty and the power of God. The people are recognizing maybe a little bit of trembling, but just the awesomeness, the awe of God meeting with them. So we see that there's this relationship, this covenant that's beginning. And it says, I will. It sets the part where I will be your God and you will be my what? My people.

And we see as well that God is redemptive. God has saved Israel out of Egypt. And you see this pattern of there is grace, you begin a relationship and of obedience. We're called to be God's treasured possession. We're to be a kingdom of priests, to be set apart, to reflect God. And we also see that Moses has this responsibility of being a messenger, a liaison, in a sense, a mediator.

And as you read you realize that this almost sounds kind of like a marriage contract. And that's the idea. All right, so we're going to get onto that a little bit. Okay. Exodus 20, we all there. Exodus 2:1, verse one. It says, and *God spoke all of these words. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery.* Couple of words that kind of just stand out. Lord your. I am your God. We belong to God. God belongs to us. Who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery. Just as it was mentioned in chapter 19, there's this referral to the fact that God has redeemed. God is graceful and has brought them out of their difficult life that was in Egypt. Although some are going to say later on, you know, hey, life is kind of better back in Egypt for a little bit when they come into trouble. Right. But they lacked faith. We'll talk more about that in a couple weeks. But we see that I am the Lord your God. God.

Does God care for those that God loves? Absolutely. And we're actually gonna see here that the ten Commandments, in a way, are rooted in grace. We're summing up the first 19 chapters of Exodus. The people are delivered, they have been saved. And now God is going to share. This is how I want you to live. Because prior to in Egypt, they were surrounded by the culture, and the culture, at some point, I'm sure, influenced them. There were many other gods that the Egyptians worshiped, but they were not God. G O D capitalized. Get the difference? And so God says, *I am the Lord your God, who brought you*

out of Egypt. The people are delivered, they've been saved. And now we see here, *you shall have no other gods before me.* Okay.

By the way, here's some of the verses we're going to be looking at today. Okay. There is no other God that can come close to being the same stratosphere as God. And so here, the first commandment, we're confronted with this idea that **the first commandment confronts us with that God has no what, no rival.** There can be other gods, but they are not God. God personally saw to their care, sent someone to bring them out. Did God ever send somebody in the world to help redeem the world? Jesus, In a sense, Moses is, in a way, a figure like Jesus. Where God Moses goes and he calls them out and redeems them. Just as Jesus came into the world, but then actually redeemed us for us, so what has God done for them? He saved them from Egypt.

Those of you who've been following God for a while. How has God shown up in your life? Has God shown up in the little things? Or has God intervened in your life at one point? Did you get sick? God healed you? Or perhaps you're that journey still right now? You ever been driving down the road and somebody does something ridiculous and almost causes an accident, and yet God told you to be mindful, to be ready? Have you ever been in a situation where you just had no idea how you were going to get out of the pit that you felt you were in, and God orchestrated or gave you wisdom to, to get out of that situation? We see that there is no other that can rival or top God. Those of you who have the privilege and honor of getting married, when you got together and you pledged your lives to each other, you created a covenant. It was sacred. You pledged life that there would be no other, right, just like God. Are we going to try to worship another God? Or do you truly want to be faithful to that person? We only have room for one. To love truly with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our strength, with all of our might. We honor and cherish that person. So if we love that person, do we want to hurt them? Do we want to disrespect them? No. We give everything to that relationship. Does it mean we're perfect? No. I mean, we've all made mistakes. But you do everything to make sure that you succeed in that relationship.

Let's transfer that to the Lord. What are you doing to see that that relationship is strengthened? How do you honor and treat God? Do you treat with love and respect?

Again, going back to now, **the first commandment also is revealing in that it's rooted in relationship.** It's rooted in relationship.

I want to go now to Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 6. So that's a couple books over. You have Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and then Deuteronomy. And I wanna go to chapter six, please, verse four. So this is some time later, okay? God had to remind the people, hey, you guys have been slacking a little bit, right? Here's a reminder. This is how I want you to live. And by the way, this is one of the most powerful statements in all of Scripture. This is Shema. It says, *hear, O Israel, the Lord our go, Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with what? All your heart, with all your soul, and with all of your strength. These commandments that I give to you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about Them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up, tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

And so we see that it's our relationship with God. It's not just a, I'm gonna put one foot in and I'm gonna keep one foot out. No, you are together. You are locked in hands clasped together. God is number one. How you view life and how you live your life, does it reflect your love for the Lord. And also moms, dads, what should you be doing? You should be sharing this with your children. Does your life reflect that? Because we all know you can say anything to your kids, but what they gonna really do, you're gonna follow what you do.

All right, so how do we understand all of this? How can we interpret this? You can't live with a divided heart. Again, Jesus said earlier we read, you can't have two masters, okay? Because one is going to demand more than the other. It's going to divide your attention and you ultimately, can you win with that relationship? No. You're going to get tired, you're going to get burnt out, maybe resentful, and perhaps suddenly just, I quit. I don't care anymore. To love the Lord, your God, with everything means heart, mind, soul, how we live? Do we honor the Lord in all that we do? And it's easy though, to have a divided heart sometimes, because what can be some of the challenges and the pitfalls that can try to take place? God? You know, I think sometimes we

get comfortable with the idea of, well, I need to make a lot of money so I can be comfortable. And yes, I do think that we should work hard. But ultimately, as we're going to learn later on in another commandment that we should trust the Lord, right? Work hard, be faithful. But is money everything? You read stories of people who have they won the lottery. How long did their money last? Some are responsible, but majority of those who win the lottery are bankrupt at some point. Or when money. When you find out, when people find out you have a lot of money, you start to see family members and friends or maybe strangers you haven't seen in years, all of a sudden show up at your doorstep, put their hand out. How do we divide the money? What do we do with the money? Marriages have been broken because they were not aligned. Money isn't everything. It's important. You need to have money to pay your bills, but it's not the end all, be all. I'm not saying you can't be rich. There's a number of wealthy people in the Bible.

Okay, but where do you place the value? Is that all you succeed? Are you maybe also succeeding to want to be the best? And maybe you're trying to seek fame and attention. You can find a lot of fame and attention, but how often is it positive? If you're doing it for yourself, that's a very dangerous road which can lead to ultimately your ego. Is your ego getting in the way of allowing God to work in your life? Or I did this, I did that. Maybe we have goals that we want to achieve and we're so driven to complete them. But at the same time too, is there any attention to God? Do we put God on the back burner? Sometimes I think even too, relationships can get in the way. With our relationship with the Lord, technology, our phones, our tablets can also be very distracting. But deep down, our ego can get us into a lot of trouble. It happened to Lucifer.

When we fully submit ourselves to the Lord, there is a promise. And that we see now that as we're rooted in Christ, we can find purpose and identity in God. So when we recognize that God is number one in our life, we become, as Paul says, children of God. We are adopted. Our identity is rooted in Christ. And when we're rooted in Christ, what does that mean? Do we reflect the ways that Christ taught us how to live? Do we love? Do we live with love and compassion? Do we listen? Do we lead? How do we treat one another? How do we depend on God? Do we worry about the little things? Or do we live faithfully? Like a sparrow, they know their meal will come. Being a follower of

Christ gives us purpose and makes a difference in your life. Christ's example is the best example that we can follow. And so although we're not going to try to be Christ because we're not, we're not God. But of the ways that Jesus shared in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and in other parts of Scripture, the rest of the Bible, do we desire to want to love God and do everything for the Lord?

Jesus shares a, Well, I should say Matthew, Mark, Luke and John share a story of an expert in the law, somebody who knew the Scriptures back and forth, who should have known better. And he asks, what's the greatest commandment? What's the most important commandment? Or what must I do to inherit light, eternal life? And Jesus responds with love God with everything, but also love your neighbor as yourself, as is found in Leviticus 19:18.

So God shares with the people. Number one, don't place anybody above me. I am the one who brought you out. I have redeemed you, I have saved you, and I desire to be in relationship with you today. We look at that now as, like, how can I be rooted in Christ? Am I spending time with Christ daily? Am I praying? Am I thinking? Am I reflecting? Or am I just. Sometimes you just feel like I'm just trying to get through the day. Are you there right now? You don't have to say, but in your mind and in your heart, do you feel like, I'm just trying to survive today? And I would just encourage you just to take even just a couple of minutes and just say, lord, I'm done. I'm exhausted. Please show me or provide the way for me as I put my life and my complete trust in you. That can be challenging, especially when you've always done everything. You're a hard charger. It's hard because what does this require? It requires submitting to God. How many of us want to submit because we don't want to be taken advantage of? We've worked hard for everything that we've done. Right. I don't need anybody else. But I want to encourage you. Give God a chance. And as you do so, fully commit to that relationship. Just as you committed to your spouse with everything. You share everything you love, honor and respect that person with everything. You love that person. Do you want to hurt them? No. You want to surprise them? You want to bring a smile to their face? Bring a smile to the Lord. Love God with everything. And love your neighbor as yourself. So we see that the same God who redeemed and saved the Israelites desires also to save and redeem you through the Lord Jesus Christ.

God, Jesus has redeemed us. Will you trust and will you love God with everything? Let go of your pride, let go of your ego and place the Lord first. Faithfully following God means we can identify that we are a child of God and a map to how you live your life. Some of us may be thinking, what does this life mean? And I want to encourage you that you can find purpose in God. And it may be uncomfortable when you realize what that could look like. You may not know, because we're all different. God calls us in different ways. We're not the same. The only thing that's the same is we're all children of God. Where do I look for security and identity when I'm not rooted in Christ? Where is your security Right now. Do you feel right now? Where do I look for security and identity when I'm not rooted in Christ?

Reflection. **What would my life look like if I truly surrendered my life to Christ and put him first?** What would my life look like if I fully submitted to Christ and surrendered my life to Christ and put him first?

You ready for the challenge this week? **I want you to write down one thing right now that is competing with God's priority.** Okay? What are some of the things that are getting in the way of inhibiting putting God first? **And I want you to take action steps to ensure it does not compete with God.** Can we do that this week? All right, so the takeaway number one, we have identity and purpose in God. The same God who says, please don't put anybody above me. I have redeemed you, I have saved you. And I want to be in relationship with you. We serve a wonderful, beautiful God. And I look forward to continuing to worship and to serving God with everything with all of you today.

God, help us to be mindful, help us to be faithful. Help us to look to you with everything. Lord, for those maybe who are here, who've never had that opportunity, we just want to say now, Lord, in our hearts say, lord, I offer everything to you now. Lead and guide me, even if I'm scared. Show me the way. Amen.