

## ***PRAYER***

Lord God, I confess that I have failed to keep you first and foremost in my life. Please forgive me. At the same time, today is a new day and I do desire, Lord, with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, to love you and to express my love for you in ways that make you smile. As I lift up my heart in prayer to you, O God, receive this prayer as an expression of my commitment to work at making you first in my life. You are my God, you alone. I love you Lord. Amen!

## ***NOTES >>***

# ***SERMON SERIES STUDY GUIDE***

**NORTH:** Nov. 8/12 | **SOUTH:** Nov. 15/19 | **CHAPEL:** Nov. 26



## ***THE FIRST COMMANDMENT***

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This study guide was written by the Pastors at Hope Lutheran Church in Fargo, ND. Find this resource and others at [FARGOHOPE.ORG/RESOURCES](https://fargo-hope.org/resources)

# ***THE FIRST COMMANDMENT***

**READ:** Exodus 20:1-11; Matthew 22:34-40

The first commandment is straightforward and blunt, “I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before me.” This commandment is number one for a reason. To be in a right relationship with God, human beings must first acknowledge there is a God and, secondly, that God is and deserves to be number one in our lives. The greatest struggle that God’s people, the Israelites, faced was the challenge of idolatry. As you read through the Old Testament you see over and over again that their hearts would turn from God to other focuses that became their gods. Idolatry simply defined is putting something or someone before God. And it was not only a challenge for the Israelites of the Old Testament, but it continues to be an issue for all people of all generations. That’s why when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, without hesitation, he replied referencing the first commandment, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:36) Jesus knew that idolatry is the greatest challenge you face in your relationship with God. And he was offering anyone who would listen a remedy to the shame, pain and blame that idolatry causes. The remedy was to work at keeping God first in your life. To love the Lord and to find ways in your life to express that love for God. In so doing, idolatry would lose its power in your life and your soul will sing with delight and joy as your relationship with God grows and flourishes!

## ***QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION***

1. Notice that the first three commandments listed in Exodus 20 focus on God. What do those first three commandments say to you about what God expects of us?
2. What does it mean to you to “put God first”?
3. What are some common expressions of idolatry in our society today?
4. What are some common ramifications of idolatry today?
5. Jesus not only referenced the first commandment as being the most important, but he even elevated it higher when he said, “You must love God with all your heart, soul and mind.” What are some ways that we as human beings can express our love for God? (For a biblical expose on loving God, see Psalm 119).
6. Explain what it means to you when Jesus said, “That all the other commandments and demands of the prophets are based on this great commandment.”
7. What one action do you need to take that would help you put God first in your life?