

# Connect 360: Substituting Ritual for Reality

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- *Lesson 3 in the BaptistWay Press Connect 360 unit "Pillars" focuses on Exodus 20:4-6.*

Although most of us are not tempted to prostrate ourselves before an idol or statue, we must keep in mind that an idol can be anything that usurps the place that God should have in our lives.

What things or people dominate our attention, thoughts, money, time and passion? The answers could be endless and different for each individual. People can turn anything or anyone into an object of worship i.e. work, hobbies, shopping, possessions, family, entertainment, even religious activities.

## Revealing God's character

The second commandment, "You shall not make or worship an idol," reveals much about God's character. He is possessive and seeks total loyalty and reverence. God is just and brings judgment upon all who disobey, but the Lord is gracious and shows lovingkindness to those who love him and keep his commandments.

This creates a conundrum, as humans are incapable of fully keeping the Law. Paul's discourse in Romans 7 reflects the tension of God requiring people to keep the Law and humankind's inability to do so.

God provides deliverance through Jesus Christ. If we are in Christ, then Jesus through his death fulfills the Law on our behalf. Does this free us to

do whatever we want? No way! We allow Christ to live through us as we are led by the Holy Spirit.

## **Worship and serve God**

The fact that God is a jealous God does not mean he is envious or petty. He is the one and only true God and does not share his glory with another. God is to be worshiped and served as he is, not as we wish him to be.

Jesus is the only authentic image of God. We all attempt to visualize or imagine God; even Moses wanted to see God's glory. However, when we reduce God to an object, we scale him down to something or someone we can manipulate or set aside. Even church buildings, altar tables, and acts of worship—such as communion—can be revered to the point of idolatry. The Bible itself, the mother of Jesus, and saints of old can become the objects of our worship or prayers. We must not worship a pastor, the Pope, a missionary, a teacher or a political leader. Even when they are at their best, people ultimately will disappoint.

The best evidence of worship we can show our children is a life of obedience and service to God. The greatest testimony of our love for God is “to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8). The only way that lifestyle is possible is through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

*Compiled by Stan Granberry, marketing coordinator for BaptistWay Press.*

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