**Small Group Sermon Study Guide: First Commandment**

Matthew 3:13-4:11 ***The Holy Way: (1) Worship the Lord Alone***

1) On the quote sheet, James Bryan Smith reflects on a popular product of an earlier era called “***mood rings”.*** Read the quote. What if you were wearing a “love of God” ring right now? And dark blue indicated no love for God, and light blue indicated overflowing love.

What color would your ring register? Why would it register that color?

2) Read Matthew 4:1-11. After Satan tempted him gain the whole world through worshipping him,

Jesus said…”It is written: ‘*Worship* the Lord your God, and *serve* him only”.

The flip side of “not” worshipping other gods is total, worship and devotion to the Lord as God.

Satan tempted Jesus to win the world through service to Satan. False gods promise, “If you serve me, I’ll give you the satisfaction you desire.”

All the common false gods are **pleasure, possessions, position, approval, performance, and power** make this sort of promise.

Which of the false gods do you find particularly persuasive? Why?

The Bible claims these false gods make “false or deceitful promises.” Do you agree? How so?

The Bible says, “Serve God only.” Some people wince at the word only. On the quote sheet

(***The First Law of Love Is Exclusivity),*** David Gill reminds us that God loves us with exclusive love

Evaluate Gills comment. Do we desire exclusive love, custom designed for us, as Gill suggests?

3) **Worship and Your “To Do” List.** Read the quote ***What Putting God First Means.***

Think about your “to do” list for next week.

You probably need “to do” some demanding tasks, some dull tasks, and some aggravating tasks.

You could approach them filled with dread or anger or resentment or laziness.

What will it look like to approach these same tasks as ventures of loving service?

4) **True Worship and Feelings**

Read the quote by Brian McLaren and Lois Tverberg (***Worship is more than a Loving Feeling I***

***Feel, it is a Loving Loyalty I Offer).***

Do you agree with McLaren’s assessment that sometimes Christian’s confuse worshipping God

with WORSHIPING-THE-FEELING-I-GET-WHILE-WORSHIPPING GOD? If you agree, what can we

do to prevent such a confusion at Rehoboth church? If you disagree, share why.

5) *If you are the Son of God.* Read Matthew 3:13-4:1-4 and I John 3:1 God said, “This is my Son”.

John says, “How great is the love the Father lavished on us that we should be called children of God and that is what we are.” This is God’s verdict! (See quote sheet ***Extra Assurance)***

Jesus would not demand extra assurance of his identity as God’s Son.

How might reminding ourselves of our identity as God’s beloved children help us face

temptation?

*Quote Sheet*

*Mood Rings*

Do you remember mood rings? These were popular a long time ago. They changed color according to the mood of the wearer. (It was actually according to body temperature, but the sellers tried to pass it off as a mood change, and they made a lot of money; even some of mine.” What if someone made “love of God” rings that indicated the level of love the wearer feels for God? And what if everyone had to wear them? If dark blue was the color that indicated no love for God, and light blue was the color that indicated overflowing love for God….

--James Bryan Smith, ***The Good and Beautiful God,*** *@ 2%*

*What Putting God First Means*

What will it mean in practice for me to put God first?... All the 101 things I have to do each day, and the 101 demands on me which I know I must try to meet, will all be approached as ventures of loving service to him, and I shall do the best I can in everything for his sake---(this attitude) as George Herbert quaintly said, “makes drudgery divine; who sweeps a room, as for your laws, makes that and th’ action fine.”

--J.I Packer, ***Growing in Christ,*** *@83%*

*The First law of love is exclusivity*

**“No Other gods before me.”** A truly astonishing angle on this first commandment is provided when we recognize that *God treats us exactly as this commandment tells us to treat him!* Each of us is known to him by name; he finds us irreplaceable, and we are each the object of his particular love and care. He even numbers the hairs on my head. He cares for me as a unique individual, never forgetting me or wishing to replace me. He tolerates no rivals in my seat at his table. When I come to God I know that he knows me intimately, that he listens to me and cares for me, that he longs to have me alongside him now, and that he has prepared a place for me with him in the afterlife. God *loves* us and the first law of love is exclusivity. God gives it and God asks for it. Everything follows from this first movement.

--David Gill, ***Doing Right,*** *p 82*

*Worship is More than a Loving Feeling I feel, it is a Loving Loyalty I Offer*

Pastor Brian McLaren points out that some “spiritual infatuation addicts” wander from church to church, looking for just the right combination of a tear-evoking message and heart-swelling music to float away in a spiritual euphoria. Certainly God’s presence is real, and it can be quite palpable. But for some, the worshipful ecstasy of “*THE FEELING*” becomes all that matters. Responding to the message or joining the church community is simply not on their agenda. “Sometimes I wonder if too many of us assume that “*THE FEELING*” is the whole point of worship—worse, that it’s the whole point of Christianity,” McLaren comments. He imagines God as asking, “If you never felt “*THE FEELING”* again, would keep worshiping me anyway, for me, and not just for the feeling.

The Hebrew word Love (ahavah) goes beyond emotions. Ahavah can also mean “to act lovingly toward” or “to be loyal to.”

*--*Comments by Brian McLaren and Lois Tverberg, ***Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus, @12%***

*Extra Assurance*

Baptism had given Jesus the clear assurance that he was God’s well-loved Son and that Father was deeply pleased with him (Mt 3:16-17). Is Jesus *really* pleasing to the Father? ….Where there is doubt that baptism works…then the search will be on for deeper assurances, better baptisms, and clearer experiences, where, finally we can be *really* sure we are true sons and daughters of God in the fullness of the Spirit…. Christian baptism does not externally transform the one baptized or one’s earthly circumstances. But now the devil offers Jesus an externally visible “baptism”: the chance to see a miracle that the senses can experience and prove. …The issue is sharp and clear: either we believe the Voice of Baptism—“You are the son of God”—or we believe the other voice: “You are the son of God when you can prove it by signs.”

--Fred Bruner, ***The Christbook Matthew 1-12,*** 124