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

I Kings 12:25-33 ***The Holy Way: (1) Worship the Lord’s Way***

1) *Looking at the text.* Read I Kings 12:25-33. The preacher Alexander MacLaren remarks:

“Jeroboam’s plan is inspired by fear.” *What are the signs of Jeroboam’s fear?*

Fear is not only a sin. It also inspires sin. *How big a role does fear play in moving you to sin?*

2) Read God’s promise to Jeroboam in I Kings 11:36-38.

*What did God promise to do for Jeroboam, if Jeroboam obeyed Him?*

*How does God’s promise address Jeroboam’s fears?*

Read I Kings 12:21-24. In this passage King Rehoboam plans to attack Jeroboam.

*What or who stops him? What sort of effect should this good news have on Jeroboam?*

3) Jeroboam institutes a new worship sites, images, priests and festivals.

Read Deuteronomy 12:4-5. *What did God decree about where He would be worshipped?*

It appears that Jeroboam worships the Lord through golden calves (although it is possible Jeroboam worshipped a Canaanite or Egyptian god whose image was the bull.)

*What did the Lord say about worshipping him through images, like golden calves?* (Dt 9:8-21)

Read Leviticus 23:33-43. *What does verse 41 say about when to celebrate this festival and who the festival is for?*

Besides fear, some theologians say we worship idols because we want a god we can control.

(see quote sheet, *The Temptation of Idolatry)*

*Was control an issue for Jeroboam? In what ways do you struggle with trusting God with a*

*future you cannot control?*

4) *Looking at the Second Commandment.*

Do you get frustrated when you tell someone about yourself, your interests and dreams and then

They treat you in a totally different way? What if they argued, “But I like to think of you

as a chain smoking, draft dodger, who pollutes the environment for fun”?

*How would you respond?*

Read the J.I.Packer quote “*A Statement that Should Not Be Trusted*”. Do you agree? Explain.

5) Idolatry is wrong because it reduces God’s majesty. It’s like asking a great Native weaver to weave a classic Navajo rug using dental floss. It can’t be done! (See other examples from Bill Hybel’s quote *Playing Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony With a Referee’s Whistle)*

*Is there an image that does honor to God’s majesty?* (See Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:4)

*What is this?*

6) Read the quote “*The Gospel in the Second Commandment”. What difference does it make for you, knowing that God would “never replace you with any image of any sort”?*

***Quote Sheet***

***A Statement that Should Not Be Trusted***

If one imagines other people to be different from what they are, there will be trouble, as psychiatrists and marriage counselors know all too well. And what is true of human relationships is truer still of our relationship with God…. (the second commandment) forbids imagining the true God as like yourself or something lower….When Israelites worshipped God under the form of a golden bull-calf, they were using their imagination to conceive him in terms of power without purity; this was their basic sin. And if imagination leads our thoughts about God, we too shall go astray. No statement starting, “This is how I like to think of God” should ever be trusted. An imagined God will always be more or less imaginary and unreal.”

--J.I. Packer, ***Growing in Christ, @ 84%***

***Adored in the Heart***

God is to be adored in the heart, not painted to the eye.

--Thomas Watson, ***The Ten Commandments,*** p59

***What is the appeal of the golden calf***

The bull is not only the ‘embodiment of fertility’ but symbolizes at the same time military power and strength. It can also remind us of the modern meaning of the ‘golden calf’ to speak of temptation to the worship of ‘Mammon’ (money).

--Jan Miloc Lochman, ***Signposts to Freedom,*** 36

***Playing Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony With a Referee’s Whistle***

“We could never shape, paint, or chisel anything that would be an adequate representation of who God is. To attempt to do so would be like asking a scholar to explain the history of the world in one sentence, or a sculptor to make a replica of Mount Rushmore on a single grain of sand, or a musician to play Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony with a Referee’s Whistle. It just can’t be done.

--Bill Hybels, qtd in ***Doing Right,*** by David Gill, 103

***The Temptation of Idolatry***

Our temptation is enflamed by the prospect of a god we can control. We think and say that we want the wild and exciting adventure of the living God, but actually we often prefer a more comfortable and mundane security. Our idols won’t surprise us. In fact they won’t talk back to us at all. All is tame, predictable and safe.

--David Gill, ***Doing Right,*** 107

***The Gospel in the Second Commandment***

The gospel in this second commandment is the invitation to embrace the living, unpredictable God whose mercies are new every morning….The true God is the God our second chance, the God who helps us grow, who teaches us, bringing things new and old to us every day. And think about this amazing reality: God never replaces you with any image of any sort! Bot doesn’t relate to you through some abstraction or system (making for example—cookie cutter Christian’s) but patiently works with you just as you are. To be sure, we are all be sanctified and gradually conformed to the image of God’s Son, Jesus Christ…but Jesus’s image is a as large and richly diverse as is the image of the body of Christ. At the same moment God’s Spirit is at work within you. God invites you to make choices, take responsibility, go this direction or that… we are created in the image of a living, free God.

--David Gill, ***Doing Right,*** 111-112