

THE FEAR OF GOD - 1ST & 2ND COMMANDMENTS

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Objective

The confirmands fear God because they love God and do not want to grieve Him.

Contents

Those who love God do not want to grieve Him.
What is idolatry nowadays?
God's name is not to be taken in vain.
The First and Second Commandments.

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1 Lead-in

Ask

What are other names for God?

Write answers on the board

- the Creator
- the Eternal One
- the Lord
- the Almighty
- the loving God
- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- etc.

Explain

The confirmands should try to divide these names into two groups. The following important points are to be emphasised:

- God is the Almighty whom we revere.
- God is also our heavenly Father whom we love.

These two aspects are to be discussed in the following section.

2 What is meant by 'the fear of God'?

Explain

The concept 'fear of God' is used to convey true reverence for God. In the old covenant this was expressed by

- regarding God as the only true and living God,
- keeping God's commandments, as well as
- not worshipping any strange gods.

Fear of punishment

God gave human beings commandments and ordinances to govern their relationship with God and among themselves. He also described the consequences and punishment which would result from violating these commandments and ordinances. Many people obeyed such regulations only because they feared punishment.

A student tells (homework)

Today too there are people to whom the fear of God only means the fear of punishment. For others however, the fear of God has a deeper meaning.

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An event in Joseph's life, while he was a servant at Potiphar's house, illustrates this (cf. Genesis 39: 7–20).

Explain

*The fear of
grieving God*

In Joseph's time the Ten Commandments did not yet exist. Nevertheless he sensed within his heart what constitutes sin. He firmly rejected the offer of Potiphar's wife: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39: 9). Joseph's fear of God enabled him to conduct himself in a manner that would not grieve God.

What does the fear of God mean in the new covenant? God's commandments are not to be kept because of fear, but voluntarily because we love and revere God. The Lord Jesus said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14: 21). The greater the love for God becomes the more fear will diminish. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4: 18).

Chief Apostle Fehr often said, **"To fear God means to fear God because we love Him and not to love Him because we fear Him."**

Workbook exercise A

The confirmands now work on exercise A in their workbook. On the basis of the answers it is to be brought out that it is in our own interest to heed and follow God's commandments.

3 Demonstrating to God that we fear Him because we love Him!

Ask

How can I demonstrate to God that I fear Him because I love Him?

Listen to answers and supplement

I want to
– sin less and less (I renounce Satan and all his work and ways).
– remain faithful to God.
– do His will.
– follow God's Son in those whom He has sent.
– bring honour to God's name and not misuse it.

A student tells (homework)

The Good Samaritan

During a conversation with a Pharisee the Lord Jesus clearly indicated which is the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10: 27; cf. also Mark 12: 30–31). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Lord Jesus also pointed out who our neighbour is.

Explain

The Lord Jesus also added: "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22: 40). This means that they also embrace the Ten Commandments which God gave the Israelites through Moses.

4 The First Commandment

The students do workbook exercise B and a student reads aloud

Ask

I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.

What are other gods?

- anthropomorphised (human-looking) images of God
- celebrity idols (famous people who are idolised)
- other things that take first place in our hearts, for example, money, egoism, power, or honour.

Explain

The confirmation teacher points out to the confirmands that all of these potential 'gods' distract people from their primary devotion to God (that is, these 'gods' can separate human beings from God).

Ask

Under what circumstances do such things become gods?

Elaborate on answers through further questions

Using a few examples from the above list the following answers are to be developed with the confirmands:

They become gods when

- they become the most important thing in our lives and fill our hearts completely.
- we put our trust in them.
- we worship them and sacrifice to them.

Ask

What are the consequences of worshipping and placing our confidence in such gods?

Elaborate on answers through further questions
Summarise

Sooner or later we will be disappointed. Those who devote themselves to such gods will not receive salvation.

For us the First Commandment means: as God's child I want to completely rely on my heavenly Father. God Himself said, **"I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God"** (Isaiah 44: 6). Just like Chief Apostle Streckeisen let us also testify: **I have decided for the Lord and that is final!**

5 The Second Commandment

The students do workbook exercise C and a student reads aloud

Ask

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

How can we "take [God's] name in vain"?

Listen to answers and supplement

- cursing
- scoffing
- making fun of God
- praying insincerely, etc.

Explain

God's name is also misused when it or the Lord Jesus' name are used at every opportunity (for example, 'Thank God', 'Oh God', 'Oh my God'). Children who esteem and love their father will respect his name.

Summarise

As God's children we wholeheartedly love and honour our heavenly Father. Let us therefore not misuse God's name.

The main points**I also want to ...**

... fear God because I love Him!

Homework

The confirmands learn the First and Second Commandments by heart.