



## A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Series Theme: Liberated for Life  
Text for the Week: Exodus 20:1-6; Jeremiah 10:1-11  
Message for the Week: "Like a Scarecrow in a Cucumber Field"

Week Two  
Sunday, January 15

### Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

Have you ever had a person you idolize fall from their pedestal?

### Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

### Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [Exodus 20:1-6](#) and [Jeremiah 10:1-11](#) out loud.

(Clicking this link will bring you to multiple translations.)

As you read and/or listen to the text being read, circle, take note of, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

## Respond / Reflect:

When has a picture "flattered" you? When has a picture "flawed" you? How did that make you feel?

How can images be helpful? How can images be harmful? Explain.

How can images of God be helpful? How can images of God be harmful? Explain.

What does the second commandment mean for us and the image saturated world we live in?

What in your life has been or could be worshiped as an idol instead of being used as a benefit to your worship of God alone?

Have you ever helped someone identify an "idol" in their life? Has anyone ever helped you identify an idol in your life?

If a snapshot or image of a person's life doesn't give the full picture of their character, do you think it is possible for a human description or image to capture the full essence of God? Why or why not?

## Try It:

Once or twice this week, spend time alone with God and invite His Spirit to point out any things that may be idols in your life and then, in obedience, humble yourselves before the LORD and in his strength turn away from those things.

## Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you. Pray this prayer together:

O LORD, our God, to you we offer our worship. You are more worthy than we can even imagine. Thank you for the revelation of yourself you have graced us with. Forgive us for the times we have allowed our minds to waver and wander to things that tempt us to worship things rather than you alone. You alone are worthy. Help us to be able to identify all those things that we need to remove from our lives that bog us down. To you belongs all the glory. AMEN

## Missional/Spiritual Practice for January: Making Room

During the month of January, you are invited and encouraged to engage in the missional practice of [Making Room](#). How do we make room? Each week, intentionally and prayerfully record and reflect on your purchases and time spent. Seek the Spirit's guidance in what you can eliminate to make room (i.e. increase your capacity) to deepen your ministry and share with others. "It is easy to say no when there is a deeper yes burning within" – Richard Foster

Consider repeating this practice weekly or several times a month. Invite several friends to join you in this practice and commit to sharing your decisions and experiences together. Support one another in prayer.

20 And God spoke all these words: <sup>2</sup>“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. <sup>3</sup>“You shall have no other gods before me. <sup>4</sup>“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. <sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup>but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

### The Message

20 <sup>1-2</sup>God spoke all these words: I am God, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of a life of slavery. <sup>3</sup>No other gods, only me. <sup>4-6</sup>No carved gods of any size, shape, or form of anything whatever, whether of things that fly or walk or swim. Don't bow down to them and don't serve them because I am God, your God, and I'm a most jealous God, punishing the children for any sins their parents pass on to them to the third, and yes, even to the fourth generation of those who hate me. But I'm unswervingly loyal to the thousands who love me and keep my commandments.

### Jeremiah 10:1-11 New International Version

10 Hear what the Lord says to you, people of Israel. <sup>2</sup>This is what the Lord says:  
“Do not learn the ways of the nations or be terrified by signs in the heavens, though the nations are terrified by them. <sup>3</sup>For the practices of the peoples are worthless; they cut a tree out of the forest, and a craftsman shapes it with his chisel. <sup>4</sup>They adorn it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so it will not totter. <sup>5</sup>Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm, nor can they do any good.”

<sup>6</sup>No one is like you, Lord; you are great, and your name is mighty in power. <sup>7</sup>Who should not fear you, King of the nations? This is your due. Among all the wise leaders of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is no one like you. <sup>8</sup>They are all senseless and foolish; they are taught by worthless wooden idols. <sup>9</sup>Hammered silver is brought from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz. What the craftsman and goldsmith have made is then dressed in blue and purple—all made by skilled workers. <sup>10</sup>But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.

<sup>11</sup>“Tell them this:  
‘These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.’”

### The Message

10 <sup>1-5</sup>Listen to the Message that God is sending your way, House of Israel. Listen most carefully:  
“Don't take the godless nations as your models. Don't be impressed by their glamour and glitz, no matter how much they're impressed. The religion of these peoples is nothing but smoke. An idol is nothing but a tree chopped down, then shaped by a woodsman's ax. They trim it with tinsel and balls, use hammer and nails to keep it upright. It's like a scarecrow in a cabbage patch—can't talk! Deadwood that has to be carried—can't walk! Don't be impressed by such stuff. It's useless for either good or evil.”

<sup>6-9</sup>All this is nothing compared to you, O God. You're wondrously great, famously great. Who can fail to be impressed by you, King of the nations? It's your very nature to be worshiped! Look far and wide among the elite of the nations. The best they can come up with is nothing compared to you. Stupidly, they line them up—a lineup of sticks, good for nothing but making smoke. Gilded with silver foil from Tarshish, covered with gold from Uphaz, Hung with violet and purple fabrics—no matter how fancy the sticks, they're still sticks. <sup>10</sup>But God is the real thing—the living God, the eternal King. When he's angry, Earth shakes. Yes, and the godless nations quake.

<sup>11-15</sup>“Tell them this,  
‘The stick gods who made nothing, neither sky nor earth, Will come to nothing on the earth and under the sky.’”

[OVER]

## Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 96

Q. What is God's will for us in the second commandment?

A. That we in no way make any image of God<sup>1</sup> nor worship him in any other way than has been commanded in God's Word.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Deut. 4:15-19](#); [Isa. 40:18-25](#); [Acts 17:29](#); [Rom. 1:22-23](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Lev. 10:1-7](#); [1 Sam. 15:22-23](#); [John 4:23-24](#)

## Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 97

Q. May we then not make any image at all?

A. God cannot and may not be visibly portrayed in any way. Although creatures may be portrayed, yet God forbids making or having such images if one's intention is to worship them or to serve God through them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Ex. 34:13-14, 17](#); [2 Kings 18:4-5](#)

## Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 98

Q. But may not images be permitted in churches in place of books for the unlearned?

A. No, we should not try to be wiser than God. God wants the Christian community instructed by the living preaching of his Word—<sup>1</sup> not by idols that cannot even talk.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Rom. 10:14-15, 17](#); [2 Tim. 3:16-17](#); [2 Pet. 1:19](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Jer. 10:8](#); [Hab. 2:18-20](#)