

Shaping Holy Hearts, Lost Time is Never Found
Exodus 20:1-4, Leviticus 26:1, Colossians 3:1-8

You shall have no other gods besides me.

It seems so simple, doesn't it? Love God best; put Him first. Don't pray to any other gods. Easy peasy.

How often do we see the words "(any king) did evil in God's sight"? All of them but 12. And do you know that most of their evil stemmed from worshipping other Gods, and being led astray by them?

I used to get so frustrated that they couldn't do this one simple thing! I mean, it's pretty clear they knew what God could do, had clear and concise evidence from generations, and even so, they chose other gods. We are blessed to have the Bible and see all the chaos this caused so we can love and worship the true God and not worry about those other gods.

Our phones have this annoying feature that tells us how much time we spend on it each week, and how that breaks down. I typically ignore it because, really, how is this relevant to anything in my life? One day it came up and caught my eye because it said your phone use was down 32%, and I still spent 5 hours a day on it on average. My phone time was DOWN to 5 hours a day. 54% of that was social media! That had my complete attention! Lost time can never be found.

That fact had me paying attention when I reached for my phone. Friends, I was reaching for my phone first thing in the morning! Even before my time with Jesus. That's a problem.

I reached for it when I was waiting in line at the store, when I was in a waiting room, and, most importantly, in the evening when I was chillaxing.

Whether I like it or not, and I don't, my phone was filling up way too much of my time. Time that could have been with God. My phone had become my idol.

You shall have no other gods besides me. (Exodus 20:3, Leviticus 19:4)

God's entire purpose in his ten words or ten commandments was to set Israel apart. To show the world that His chosen people are different in how they live their lives. They have rules and morals that show how Israel's God is The God.

As I processed the fact that I spent six hours on my phone on a down week, I had to ask, how valuable is my time and how do I want to spend it? I mean, I am 60, my hours on this side of heaven are limited, and I sure don't want to waste time doing nothing. You see, 34% of my time was on games. That really is nothing.

This takes me back to our theme for our verse for this Lent. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

Paul reminds us that when we choose Christ when we choose to take up our cross, our lives look different than those who don't. He tells us to set our minds on things above, not earthly things. (Colossians 3:1-4) The worldly things we choose over Jesus become our idols. Whatever we make our idol will be a cross to us as believers. (This is not taking up Jesus' cross like he tells us, rather we are making our own cross)

You shall have no other God besides me, the first commandment God gave Moses on Mt. Sinai. I think this was very purposeful. First, it was part of God's covenant with Moses. God gives both blessings and curses that come with that covenant. Second, this set the tone for the next nine commandments. If they couldn't get this one right, they had no hope of getting the ones right.

I would love to tell you that I hardly ever use my phone anymore, but that's not true. I took social media off my phone so it's not as easily accessible. That has helped some. The games are still there, but I try to be more aware of the time I am on them. Full disclosure, I have been on one level of a game I play for two weeks, and I do play that more than I should, but it is driving me crazy!! Thankfully I only have five lives.

I spend more time reading now, both fiction and non-fiction. I'm doing Priscilla Shirer's The Armor of God and loving it. I've also taken some education classes I've wanted to do, including a study on C. S. Lewis through Hillsdale College, which is so good!

Friends, I think this will be a battle for us as long as we live here. As I look over the years, I see different idols at different times. Sometimes it's even been ministry. Time is so important, and how we spend it for God's kingdom makes so much difference.

Challenge: This week, the challenge is to see how much we depend on our phones to fill our time. Track your phone use for a week, or check out the tracking on your phone. Then let's make changes in our time on the phone or the way we use our phone to honor God better.

Lord, you are the great creator. You have given us a plethora of tasks to glorify you, and you offer us rest. Help us use our time wisely, to seek your counsel and hear your voice so that we can give you the glory you deserve! It should always be about you God, not us. Show us how to do that. In Jesus name, Amen.

How important is your phone in your life? Can you ignore it for an hour? Three hours? A whole day?

Are there things you would love to do, but don't feel you have the time? How can you fit those into your schedule?

Can you use your phone to spend time with Jesus or in your Bible? List some ways.

Dive deeper,

Leviticus 26

The Ten Commandments are a covenant with Israel. God was clear on who was saying the words, (20:1) and reminds Israel of what He's already done for them by delivering them from the land of slavery in Egypt.

This covenant comes with blessings if they obey God's call to be completely loyal to Yahweh alone, observe the Sabbath, and show proper respect for Yahweh's holiness. (20:2)

The blessings appear to mirror life in Eden; plenty of rain for a good harvest, a peace that has no room for fear, the miraculous defeat of enemies, the growth of God's chosen people, and, best of all, God is right there among them. (Leviticus 26:3-13)

But if they reject God's commands and aren't loyal to Him, the curses are many. They will be afraid and face famine, disease, and violence. Their enemies will again oppress Israel and they will even face exile.

I'd like to say this is such an easy choice, but I have learned that while my sin may not be as obvious as the ten commandments and the law God gave Moses, Jesus brought nuance to those laws. I may never have murdered someone but have I harbored hate for a person? I am so glad that God sent us a Savior to carry these burdens with us!