



Two

The Second Commandment

Family Study Guides • The Ten Commandments Series

Two

The Second Commandment

“You shall not make for yourself any graven image.”

We suggest that as you use this Family Study Guide, select and focus on a main portion or two that you feel will help your family’s study into the commandment. You do not need to cover every aspect, discussion or scripture presented in this guide. Select the aspects or principles most relevant or helpful to your family.

Objectives:

- Discuss as a family the meaning and importance of the Second Commandment.
- Review examples of the Second Commandment being obeyed or disobeyed in the Bible.
- Help your family deepen essential understandings: God is the only true God and protector. We cannot worship or put anything above God. How we worship God is important to Him.

Memory Verse

Older children:

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exodus 20:4-6).

Younger children:

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (1 John 5:21).

1. What can we learn about God from His Second Commandment?

a. Some religions misunderstand the Second Commandment and they combine it with the first.

- Read the First Commandment in Exodus 20:3 or Deuteronomy 5:7. What does it actually say?
- The First Commandment has to do with *whom* we worship, while the Second Commandment has to do with *how* we worship the true and only God.

b. This commandment teaches us how we are to think about God.

- We are not to think about God as looking like anything that we see here on the earth or in the universe (Exodus 20:4-6).





- Throughout history, people have wanted to worship something they can see. Because of that, they create images of those things they believe to be their gods. The Native Americans worship the earth and sky and nature, saying that all of it makes up god. The Egyptians during the time of the Israelites, had gods that looked like the sun, the moon and sometimes animals. They made statues of most of these so they could see them. They didn't think they could believe in anything they couldn't see.
- There is only one true God. Speaking of God and Christ, 1 Peter 1:8 says, "Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice..." (ISV).
- The Second Commandment tells us that God does not want us to make images that we think represent Him—or any other god!

2. Why is this commandment important?

a. God says He does not want us to use images to represent Him or His Creation (Read Isaiah 44).

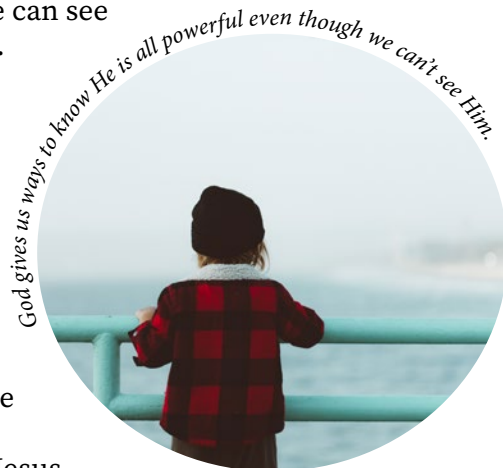
- God says not to make pictures or images to use as forms of worshiping Him.
- Read Romans 1:21-25. What does this passage say about what happens to people as a result of worshiping idols?

b. No statue or image can fairly represent God's power.

- The First Commandment shows that God is all-powerful. There is not any one thing or one way in which we can describe or represent Him. We would not see God as the living God, if we tried to represent Him in a picture or a statue. The Second Commandment reminds us that God is far greater than anything we can see or imagine. There is nothing that is equal to Him.
- God wants us to worship Him in our hearts and minds. This takes faith, which is believing in something that you cannot see (Hebrews 11:1).

c. Although God gives some basic descriptions of Himself in the Bible, there is no way that we could make a picture or statue of Him that would show Him as He really is.

- God is greater than we can imagine! It is not possible for us to draw a picture or make a statue that looks like God because no human has ever looked at God's face. We also do not know what Jesus looked like when he was on earth. We know that He created humans in His likeness so He has a form that looks like a human. But we do not know His exact facial likeness. We also know that He is not in the form or shape of any animal, fish or bird.
- "I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images" (Isaiah 42:8).
- "To whom can you compare God? What image can you find to resemble him? Can he be compared to an idol formed in a mold, overlaid with gold, and decorated with silver chains?" (Isaiah 40:18, NLT).



- d. God gave us ways to know He is all powerful even though we can't see Him.
- One of these ways is His creation. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).
 - Another way we see God's power is through the things He does for us when we obey His laws (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).
- e. We show love to God by not making a statue or picture of Him and bowing down to worship that object as if it were God.
- God said that if we bow down to worship a carved statue then that is an act of disrespect and those who do that will be punished.
 - “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods” (Exodus 20:5, NLT). While this says that we should not have an image of anything and pretend it is a god, it also means that God does not want us making images of things and pretending it is *Him*!

Discuss Biblical examples that involve obeying or breaking the Second Commandment.

Israel, the Philistines and the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 4-7)

- Why did Israel bring the ark to battle against the Philistines? How could this be seen as violating the Second Commandment? What were the consequences?
- What did the Philistines rely on for power? How was this a violation of the Second Commandment? What were the consequences?
- How did God show His true power throughout this story? What can we learn about God from the way things turned out?

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3)

- How was the Second Commandment obeyed or violated in this account?
- How did God show His true power? What can we learn about God from the way things turned out?

Paul and idol worship in Athens (Acts 17:16-32)

- Why was Paul so upset in Acts 17:16? What actions showed how seriously he took the Second Commandment? Read 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 to see the way Paul “reasoned” on this subject.
- In what ways did the Greeks and their culture promote idol worship? What influence from this society do we still see today in society, including our media?
- The Areopagus was a place where the “experts” would discuss “new ideas” in society. Where and how do we see this type of thinking today? Why was it important that Paul spoke to these people? Based on what we know about the Second Commandment, how should we view these types of ideas in our society?
- How did people respond to Paul? Look at both the worshipers and the philosophers. Why do you think they acted this way?
- What can we learn from the way Paul represented God in this situation?

3. What are some things we might be putting before God in our lives?

- a. The god of pleasure.
 - Pleasure is like a drug. The need for always doing fun things can start as a legitimate diversion from school work or chores or our jobs, but when you only want to have fun, it can take your time, money, and energy.
 - Wanting fun—if out of balance—can become sin.

- a. The god of possessions.
 - Wanting “stuff” can dominate our lives. Do we place money and things first, always needing to have the “right” clothes, shoes, toys and technology? Or, as you get older, the right cars and house?
 - With regard to possessions, Proverbs 27:20 tells us, “the eyes of man are never satisfied.”

- a. The god of “me first.”
 - This is a god when a person feels that the world revolves around them.
 - A person who places “me first” feels that they must always come out on top.

- a. The god of “my activities.”
 - This is anything that occupies the mind and life ahead of God—such as being so busy with other things that your relationship with God is pushed behind you.
 - Someone who places activities first may feel that they are “too busy” to have time for God.

Family Discussions & Activities

Stuffed Animal Analogy Lesson (for younger students)

Put out some stuffed animals, or pictures of stuffed animals for the children to see and ask:

1. Do these toys look like other creatures you know about? (Yes) These are images of something God created.
2. Do you have a stuffed animal that is special to you? What is it?
3. Are these stuffed animals alive? (No)
4. Could these stuffed animals help you if you were in trouble? (No). Some people look to non-living things like stuffed animals to help them. These things are called “idols.” Sometimes it is a statue, or even a tree.
5. Can you think of anything people hang up, or carry, as “good luck” charms to protect them? (Example: a cross, statues of dead “saints,” rabbit’s feet, stones, beads, medals). These are all idols, and should not be looked to for good luck or blessings. Only God can give us the blessing of protection.



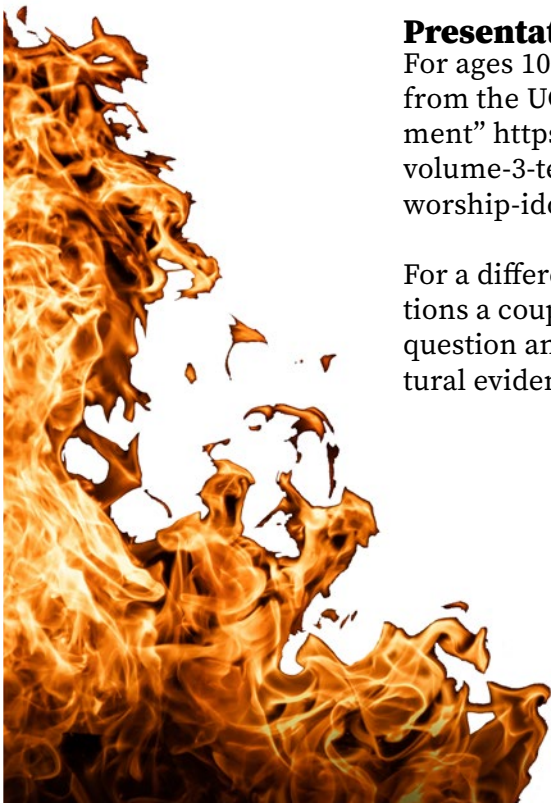
Family Discussions & Activities (continued)

Ten Commandments Journal

Write down the Second Commandment in your family notebook. Discuss and then write about what the commandment means to each family member. Discuss things that “idolize” or could take the place of God.

Discussion Questions

- The Bible and the Ten Commandments show us that God warns against the practices of worshipping idols and against other forms of idolatry. What is God’s definition of true worship? (Acts 5:29, Deuteronomy 8:6; Matthew 22:37-39).
- What does it mean when God says He is “jealous”? Why would God say this? Study how the word is used in this scripture, and where else it is used in the Bible (Strong’s H7067, Hebrew word qanna). Why should we be glad that God is jealous for His people? What is the difference between being jealous *of* someone and being jealous *for* someone? The first four Ten Commandments shows how to worship God.
- As a family, research the origins of Christmas and Easter symbols. What symbols have come down from the idol worship in the Bible? Discuss the things used for Christmas and how those are, in reality, idols of worship for some people.
- Notice the charms that people wear, carry, or put in their cars for protection. Or look in a store (such as statues, dice, rabbit’s feet, stones, crosses, medals, etc.) that are for sale. Discuss that these could become idols for people. It is impossible for these things to do anything, much less protect people.



Presentation

For ages 10 and up: Use scriptures and discussion questions from the UCG Teen Bible Study Guide “The Second Commandment” <https://www.ucg.org/teen-bible-study/teen-bible-study-volume-3-ten-commandments/second-commandment-do-not-worship-idols>

For a different format, assign each student 1-2 of these questions a couple of weeks beforehand. Have them research the question and create a short 1-2 minute presentation with scriptural evidence in response to the question(s).

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego

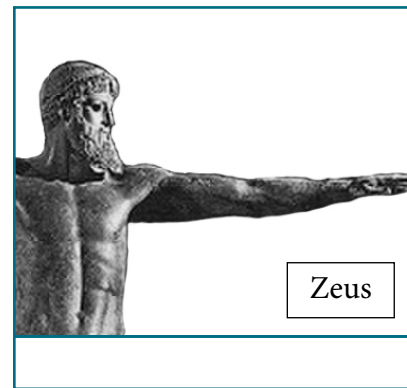
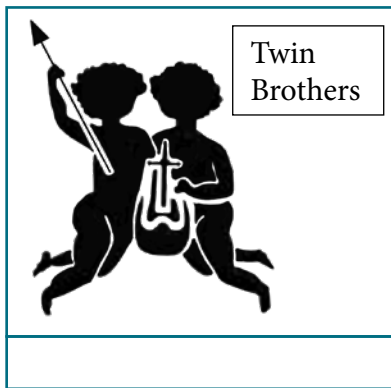
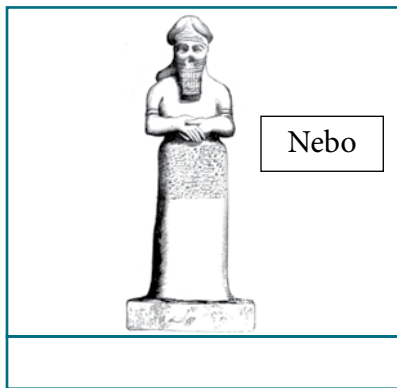
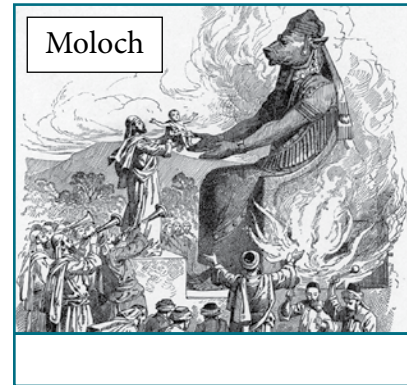
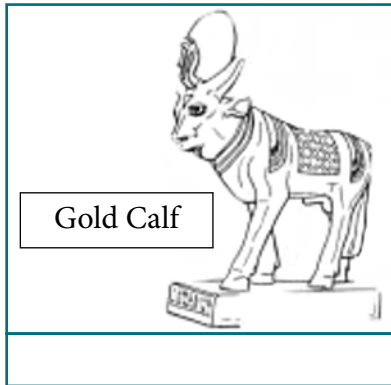
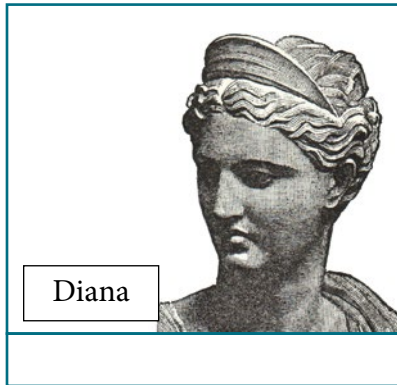
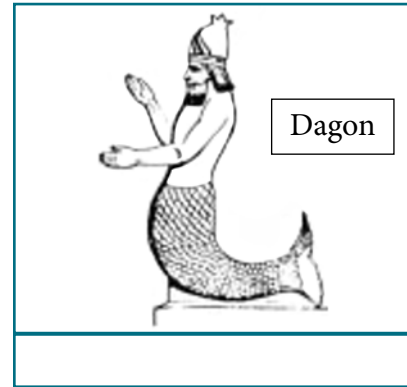
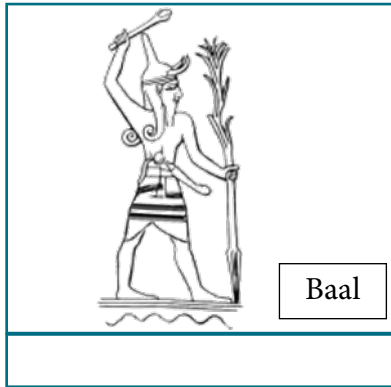
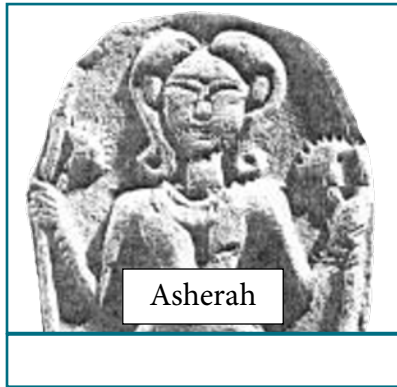
Read Daniel 3 (in a student friendly version) together.

These three young men (Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego) obeyed and kept God’s Commandments and God protected them. They knew that they should only look to God for protection and not anything else.

Why does it matter to God how people worship?

Pagan Gods Mentioned in the Bible

Some pagan gods who are mentioned in the Bible are pictured below. Match the god with the corresponding scripture and write it under each one. Then cut the false gods into confetti.



Exodus 32:5, 8, 19 Numbers 22:41 1 Samuel 5:2-7	1 Kings 18:19 Isaiah 46:1 Acts 7:43	Acts 14:12-13 Acts 19:24, 27-28 Acts 28:11
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Things We Trust and Put Ahead of God

Worshiping God in sincerity and truth means obeying the First and Second Commandments. In ancient times mankind made many images to represent God. People worshiped things found in nature like the sun, moon, stars, bugs and cows. In modern times we put material possessions and our hearts' desires ahead of our desire to obey God's Commandments. The edge of this page contains words that represent things available in our society that people might believe in or put their trust in besides God.

Look through magazines and cut out pictures to paste on this page, or another sheet of paper, which would represent the gods of our society and which would match the words at the edge of the paper. Have fun!

CARS

WRONG RELIGIONS

MOVIE STARS

DRUGS

MAGICIANS

JOB OR
HIGH POSITION

SEX APPEAL

CLOTHES

THE MILITARY

EXPENSIVE
HOUSES

GOOD LOOKS

SPORTS

FORTUNE-TELLERS

CELEBRITIES OR
SPORTS FIGURES

MUSICIANS

JEWELRY

**Put your trust in the
God of the Bible!**

Additional Resources for Your Family Studies

UCG Study Booklet “The Ten Commandments”

<https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets/the-ten-commandments>

UCG Beyond Today Bible Study Series “The Ten Commandments”

<https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/beyond-today-bible-study/ten-commandments>

UCG Teen Study Guide “The Second Commandment”

<https://www.ucg.org/teen-bible-study/teen-bible-study-volume-3-ten-commandments/second-commandment-do-not-worship-idols>

Q&A “Why Shouldn’t We Wear a Cross as a Sign of Being a Christian?”

<https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-questions-and-answers/why-shouldnt-we-wear-a-cross-as-a-sign-of-being-a-christian>

Article “Paganism in Christianity”

<https://www.ucg.org/vertical-thought/paganism-in-christianity>

Pagan Gods Mentioned in the Bible (Answer Key)

1. Asherah (and or Baal)	1 Kings 18:19
2. Baal	Numbers 22:41
3. Dagon	1 Samuel 5:2-7
4. Diana	Acts 19:24, 27-28
5. Golden Calf	Exodus 32:5, 8, 19
6. Moloch	Acts 7:43
7. Nebo	Isaiah 46:1
8. Twin Brothers	Acts 28:11
9. Zeus	Acts 14:12-13