

“You shall have no other gods before me.” Exodus 20:3

Have you ever idolized someone so much that you wanted to be like them, or even worship them? Perhaps it was a celebrity, a sports star, a politician, a religious leader or someone you knew personally, such as a friend, a teacher, or a family member. You admired their talents, achievements, charisma, or even their personality. As an admirer you hang onto every word spoken by them, how they carried themselves and valued their opinion. As a result of your admiration, you tried to imitate them, to please them and perhaps impress them.

One such personality existed in a famous TV evangelist known as Jimmy Swaggart. As a young minister he composed and sang many Christian songs. His gift brought him both fame and success and he proceeded to open a television ministry. He became the admiration of young and older ministers. At the height of his ministry, it was discovered that he had been involved in sexual misconduct with ladies including being detained by the police while in the company of sex worker. He was defrocked and lost his position in the church. Many years later when asked why he fell so hard, Jimmy Swaggart said, “I was so high up that no one felt they could correct me or chastise me”

The world had esteemed Jimmy but now had to deal with his public fall from grace. Many believers felt betrayed, hurt and some even left the faith. The man of God was flawed like every other human being. This pattern is common among many esteemed personalities. The bible clearly shows us the life of King David, Samson and Noah; it does not shield us from the mistakes, flaws and shortcomings of human nature especially in the untransformed version. But how do you cope with the realization that your idol is imperfect?

The truth is, no human being can live up to our expectations of perfection, or fill the void in our hearts. God set eternity in the hearts of men that we would seek Him alone. No human being can be our ultimate source of wisdom, meaning, hope, inspiration, and growth. No one can be our God!

That is why God commands us to have no other gods before him. He knows that idolizing people is harmful to us and to them. It is harmful to us because it distracts us from the true and living God, who alone deserves our worship, our trust, our love, and our obedience. And it is harmful to our idol because it puts an unbearable burden on them, and may expose them to the temptation of pride, corruption, and abuse of power.

God wants us to have a healthy and balanced relationship with people. He desires that we respect and appreciate people for who they are, not for who we want them to be. He wants us to learn from and be inspired by people, to love and serve people not to place them on a pedestal too hard to bear. Only God can satisfy our deepest needs and desires. He alone can give us the peace, joy, and purpose that we long for. God is jealous God and commands that there be no other God before Him. He is God alone.

Prayer:

Lord, forgive me for the times I idolized people and put them before You. Help me recognize and repent of any idols in my heart. I choose to love You with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love my neighbor as myself. Teach me to worship You in spirit and in truth, and to serve You with gratitude and humility. In Jesus' name, Amen.

