

Leaders' Notes

The Ten Great Freedoms
Sermon #3

First Brethren Church of Sarasota, Florida
January 17, 2010

Dear Growth Group Leader:

This is covenant week for our growth groups. This is when we ask our people to make a commitment to attend for the rest of the quarter. It would be good for you to emphasize the commitment and explain the reasons for it. We are not asking for a commitment because we care about the attendance numbers or we just like to control people. We need people committed to the groups because relationships only form when people come together and communicate. And the deepest relationships form in a place of trust. If one of your members only comes occasionally, the other members will find it hard to develop trust in him/her. That person will also have a hard time catching up on the group dynamic.

I know how hard it is to ask for a commitment in our culture today. All we can do is offer this kind of group to people who are ready for it. If there are those who don't want to be committed, we cannot force it. All we can do is say that these groups are for those who want it. Of course, even committed people can't come all the time. If someone is sick, we don't want him to come (especially if he is contagious). If someone is out of town or called in to work, obviously she can't be at group that night. But we want to communicate the expectation that this group is priority in the lives of its members. Everyone will get more out of it if we have some level of commitment from everyone in the group.

Blessings,

Pastor David

Freedom to worship in spirit and truth

Exodus 20:4-6

The first and second command

The first command tells us who to worship, the second tells us how to worship.

A false image of God is just as wrong as a false god.

The jealous God

God is not jealous of us, he is jealous for us.

Worship in spirit and in truth

Isaiah 40:18-20, 1 Kings 8:27-30, John 4:19-26

We are tempted to reduce God to an image we control.

Isaiah 40:18-20, 1 Kings 8:27-30

Jesus suggested that even the temple would one day be too much of a hindrance to true, spiritual worship.

Still today, people have false images of God.

J.B. Phillips' book, *Your God Is too Small*, suggests some false images:

Resident policeman.

Parental hangover.

Grand old man.

Meek and mild Jesus.

The true picture: Jesus.

Colossians 1:15-16, 19.

Home Bible Study

Freedom to worship in spirit and truth

Getting started

1. Was the sermon clear to you? Did you have any trouble understanding the second command? Did part of the sermon make you think?
2. As a child, what did you picture in your mind when you thought of God?

None of us, even as senior citizens, has a complete view of God. Hopefully we can see how our concept of God has grown from a childish view to a more mature view.

3. Does it bother you to think of God as jealous? Why or why not? If we think of petty jealousy, of course we will have a problem with this concept. God is not petty. Certainly God is not jealous of us. Why would he be jealous of us when everything we have and everything we are is from him? We shouldn't have a problem when we understand that God is jealous for us—i.e., he wants a relationship with us and does not want us to settle for cheap imitations, frauds, or fakes.

Going deeper

4. One of the truths this week is that we should get our image of God from God's revelation in his word. But God's word says that we may understand something of God's character from his creation. Read Romans 1:18-20. It seems that God very much wants us to know him. Why do you think that is?
God wants a relationship with us. How can we have that relationship if we don't know who he is?
5. What can you tell about God from what he has created in the universe all around us, including the stars and planets, plants and animals, the earth, and humans themselves?
We know God is powerful from the vastness of space and the power of the stars, black holes, quasars and galaxies. We know that God is imaginative from the diversity of life. We know that God is intelligent from the design in DNA and all living things. We can even sense some of God's justice from our drive to justice and some of God's goodness from the beauty and love we see in creation.
6. Read Hebrews 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-20. These passages teach us that Jesus is the exact representation of God. Jesus

himself said that if we saw him, we saw the father. What can you know about God through knowing Jesus?

Here we get a clearer picture of God's goodness, love and grace. I know people who have had a difficult time with their concept of God but who loved Jesus. Well, Jesus is the exact picture of God.

7. Have you ever held false views of God? If so, what were they? This is a personal question but, if you feel open to do so, you may share some of your false views from the past.