

Toward Understanding the First Commandment

Introduction

- A. Because of the effects of the Enlightenment and the impact of the technological age in which we are living -- we often find ourselves searching for the right "formula" for success.
- B. The Evangelical Church has always taught that it is not enough to "know" the plan of salvation, one must "truly believe" -- that is -- **receive a Person** -- in order to be saved.
- C. The truth of this "personal participation" with God is clearly emphasized in Scripture. Note the significance of the words -- **fellowship, worship, share, participate, partake** and most emphatic of all -- **love**.

I. The Bible teaches the necessity of "personal participation."

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants **for you, O God**.
My soul thirsts **for God, for the living God**. When can I go and meet **with God**?
Psa 42:1,2 (emphasis mine)

You will **seek me** and **find me** when you **seek me** with all your heart.
Jer 29:13 (emphasis mine)

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and **I will give you rest**."
Matt 11:28 (emphasis mine)

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far **from me**."
Mark 7:6 (emphasis mine)

Jesus replied: "**Love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **This is the first and greatest commandment**." Matt 22:37,38
(emphasis mine)

(Consider also John 1:12; 14:15; I Cor 1:24; 2:2-5; II Cor 3:6; Phil 3:10; II Tim 3:5; Titus 1:16; James 2:14-19; I John 1:3,6,7; 5:3; Rev 2:4; 3:20)

II. The Fallacy of "Believing" Truth But Not Being Involved with God as a Person.

A. Illustrations of this fallacy.

1. Such "believing" in God does not make one a Christian.
2. Such "believing" in love does not make one loving.
3. Such "believing" in the power of God does not make one powerful.
4. Such "believing" in the filling of the Holy Spirit does not make one filled.
5. Such "believing" in the gifts of the Holy Spirit does not make one gifted.
6. Such "believing" in holiness does not make one holy.

B. Provisional principles related to this fallacy.

1. We may not separate the "Written Word" from "The Living Word." The Bible is powerful **only as one believes as an act of trusting God.** (John 5:39,40; 7:63; Heb 4:12-14)
2. We cannot be content in our life and ministry with simply a commitment to Bible doctrine and formulas for success, or helpful ideas. Nor can we be content with leading others to do the same. The goal in our own life and ministry must rise above "behavioral modification" to "spiritual transformation." Note the relevance of Rom 8:13; 2:1,2
3. Leading a person to conform externally to the commandments of the Bible and the rules of the Church will not enable them to walk in freedom, power, joy or fruitfulness.

III. Counsel Related to the Correction of this Fallacy.

A. Select Scripture admonitions.

1. In the explanation of repentance: **Against you, you only**, have I sinned and done what is evil **in your sight.** Ps 51:4 (emphasis mine)
2. In the explanation of faith: "**Believe in the Lord Jesus**, and you will be saved--you and your household." Acts 16:31 (emphasis mine)
3. In the explanation of cleansing from sin: But if **by the Spirit** you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. Rom 8:13 (emphasis mine)
4. In the explanation of life and service: "**Apart from me you can do nothing.**" John 15:5 (emphasis mine)
5. In the explanation of prayer: "**You may ask me** for anything in my name and **I will do it.**" John 14:14 (emphasis mine)
6. In the explanation of the fruit of the Spirit: "May the **God of hope fill you** with all joy and peace **as you trust in him**, so that you may overflow with hope **by the power of the Holy Spirit.** Rom 15:13 (emphasis mine)

B. Personal counsel for the correction of this fallacy.

1. We must personally seek God for wisdom and help so that we can fall in love with the Lord Jesus and live our daily life in worship, trust, and surrender. (Matt 22:37,38)
2. We must lead those to whom we minister into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus and the wholehearted practice of love, worship, trust, and surrender. (I Cor 1:24,30; 2:2-5)

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