

“You Don’t Get Your Own Personal Jesus” // Exodus 20:4–5; 32:1–24 // *Not God Enough* #2

Introduction

Exodus 20, if you have your Bible... This is the **2nd week of our series *Not God Enough***, which corresponds to a book I have coming out by that same title. I told you that there are **2 reasons** I am doing a short series of messages along this theme:

- **First, the books I write are just an overflow** of what God is teaching me here, so I wanted to take some time to review it with you before we present it to the world.
- **Second, I wanted you to know that I, and every pastor here, are committed to never making anything off** of anything we sell here. All proceeds go back into the ministries of the church.

The **1st week I explained that most Americans prefer a God** who is small and manageable—a God we can understand, predict and control—a God that basically just a slightly bigger, slightly smarter version of us.

But, I showed you, this is just not the God we encounter in the Bible; furthermore, such a God could never sustain our faith, answer our deepest questions, or give us hope during trials.

In this 2nd week, I want to discuss another dimension of this, and that is the particularly American idea that if we don’t like something about God, we can simply reshape him into a form we do like. We like to see God **as a salad bar** where we choose the ingredients we like and leave the ones we don’t, or a **build-a-bear God** where we are free to assemble the deity that makes us feel the most warm and snuggly.

- **One of the stories I tell in the book is of a talk-show** I was watching where 2 people were debating some moral issue. Both

claim to be Christians... “My Jesus would never...” *You don’t get your own personal Jesus!*

Of course, the tendency to re-imagine God in a form we prefer is not a uniquely American problem. We may have perfected it, but it doesn’t originate with us. It was so common, in fact, that the **2nd Commandment of “God’s Big 10”** was explicitly about this, and incidentally this was the 1st commandment Israel broke after receiving the commandments.

The 2nd commandment reads like this: ⁴ “You shall not make for yourself a carved image... for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me... **(Exodus 20:4–5)**”

- The **key word is ‘image.’** This is a command to **not add a shape in our minds to God** that he has not given to himself.

People sometimes read this commandment and assume it is just a restatement of the **1st commandment, 1st Commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me.” Exodus 20:3¹**

- And there is some overlap, but there is also a shade of difference. The 1st focuses on worshipping the *wrong gods*. The 2nd is about worshipping the right God in the wrong way.
- We violate the 2nd commandment when we add something to God—some image—that goes beyond, or contrary to, what God tells us about himself in his word.

We also might be tempted to read this today and think, “Well, I don’t own any graven images... I don’t have any gold statues I bow down to, so I’m clear on this one.”

But we break this command whenever we assign to God a form or an attribute he did not give to himself.

¹ (*PUT THIS ABOVE THE PREVIOUS WITH THEM BOTH DISPLAYED ON THE SCREEN AT ONCE)

Write this down: We break this commandment whenever we define God as we want him to be rather than as he is. Or, when we elevate our preferences about God above God's statements about himself.

And I would suggest to you that there is probably no command we more **consistently and routinely break than this one.**

- **It comes out like this,** "The way I see God is..." or "I don't think God would really have a problem with..." or "I prefer to think of God as..."?
 - No offense, but **what does that even mean?** *Who cares how you prefer to see God?*
 - (Ironically, one of the best mockeries of this is that scene in **Talladega Nights**, where Will Ferrell and that other guy go on a rampage about "how they like to see Jesus.")

WF: *I like Christmas baby Jesus best, so that's who I pray to. 8lb 6oz. baby Jesus, all snuggly there in your diapers in your crib and yet Omnipotent.*

OG: *I like to picture Jesus in a tuxedo T-shirt because it says I want to be formal, but I'm here to party. (Cause I like to party, and so I like my Jesus to party, too.)*

Or, I like to picture Jesus as a figure skater. He comes out wearing like a white outfit, and he does interpretive ice dances of my life's journey.

Even Hollywood seems to recognize that **picking out one angle** on Jesus and saying that's how you like to see him is ridiculous. And folks, when Will Ferrell mocks the inconsistencies of your theology, that's a problem.)

The bottom line is this: It doesn't matter how we "like to see God;" God is who he is. When God appeared to Moses and Moses asked him his name, God didn't say, "Moses, I am whoever you need me to be." He said, "I am who I am."

Notice, vs. 4–5, that God equates re-shaping God into a new image with **hating** him.

- **Because you are saying,** "God, I don't like the real you, I need you to be this for me to love you."
- **Ladies, imagine if your husband found out** that you routinely told your friends, "I like to see my husband as... a 6'4" Jack from "This is Us," who lifts weights, has a passion for Victorian-era romance novels, and whose perfect idea of date night is perusing the aisles at Target.
- **If you keep saying that, your real husband, 5'6" Terry** who works in IT, wears penny loafers and likes fantasy football, might get upset. He has a right to ask you why you have to re-imagine him in order to love him.

It's an insult to God when we have to reshape into a something else to be able to love him.

I have a little litmus test to help you determine whether or not you are doing this: How often does your God contradict you, confuse you, or make you mad? Because if you're not, chances are you are not really letting God be God, you are only re-imagining him as you would want him to be.

Any time you are in a relationship with a real person, they are going to confuse and contradict you. It's why our 1st years of marriage is often so hard. It's why when people ask me how long I've been married, I tell them, "**16 wonderful years...** and 2 other ones, for a total of 18." See, when you start to date a person, psychologists tell us, you get to know a part of them—and you like that part, and then you fill in all the gaps of what you don't know about them with what you want them to be. This all gets shattered, of course, in the 1st 6 months of marriage, because the real person is usually not like your imagination (That's why I've heard it said that love is a dream and marriage is the alarm clock.) Real people in real relationships do things that surprise and contradict us. **How much moreso with God?**

Do we really suppose that God is just a slightly bigger reflection of ourselves?

Karl Barth said, *“If our God never contradicts us, or makes us mad, then we are likely not worshipping him, but a reflection of ourselves.”*²

We Americans might be the worst at this because we assume that we are at such an advanced moral stage that if there is a God, of course he’s going to see things like we do in our enlightened state.

But **why do we assume** we are at a place where we don’t need correction, and that everything in us that “feels right” is actually right?

- **We know that wasn’t true of previous generations.**
 - We know, for example, it **felt right to some of our grandparents** that the races be kept separate. “It just doesn’t feel right.” Today, we know that’s wrong.
 - **It feels right in certain cultures** for women to not be educated and be kept in the home. We say, “That may ‘feel’ right to you, but that is wrong.”
 - **In Viking days**, we know they conducted honor killings because it “felt like” the only way to even the score if someone insulted you. Today we say, “But that feeling was wrong.”
- **Why do we assume that we are the first generation in history whose instincts are 100% reliable?** Do we really think that 100 years from now our great-grandchildren will look back at us admiring how morally advanced we were?
 - **Think, for example**, about how we talk about the worldview of our great-grandparents. We say, “Can you believe Grandma and grandpa thought this?” We say, “How did they miss that blind spot?”
 - **Do we think 100 years from now our great grandchildren** won’t be doing the same to us? Do we feel like we are the 1st generation where all future generations will look back and admire us for our moral foresight? **Hardly.** (*We’re the*

generation that put up Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton as candidates, so it is safe to assume that is not going to happen).

- **I’ve told you: The Bible offends every culture and every generation**, just in different ways.
 - I think I’ve told you that one of the most interesting things to me when I lived overseas in a Muslim culture was observing where the Bible offended them, just in totally different ways it did us: John 8. We’re offended by the sexual ethics, they are offended by that.
 - **Why do we assume everyone else’s instincts need to be corrected but not ours?**
 - The Bible is an **equal opportunity offender**—and that’s what you’d expect if the Bible really is the Word of God and we are a fallen people.))
- As Americans, the Bible confronts both sides of our cultural divide—our nationalism and our pride on the one side and our craving for moral and sexual anarchy on the other.
- **To really know God, you have to be willing for God** to say some things to you that you don’t want to hear. **Because, only then, as I’ll show you,** can we hear from him the things we desperately do want to hear.

Well, like I mentioned, this was the 1st commandment the children of Israel broke. Let me walk you through that story, because it gives us insight into where the temptation to distort God comes from and the spiritual damage that it causes.

Exodus 32:1–24

(BTW, yes, this is a passage we looked at just a few weeks ago where I used Moses’s prayer in here as a demonstration for how we should pray. This week we’re going to take a totally different angle on it, focusing on the sin of the people).

32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”

² Karl Barth, Commentary on Romans, p. 44

Remember, Moses had gone up into Mt. Sinai to be with God and receive the Commandments. Well, **Moses ended up being gone a little longer** than expected, **and so everybody freaked out**, thinking God and Moses had abandoned them.

(Which, I told you, was totally insane. Think about all that God had done to get them to this point:

- He had delivered them miraculously from the most powerful empire in the world through 10 supernatural plagues
- And, as a little finishing touch, a little cherry on top, he moved all these rich upper-class Egyptians to take off their jewelry and give it to the Israelites as a going-away present.
- Then God led them every day with a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. (Some people want to know how to know if God is with them. **They could see him!**)
- Then he split the Red Sea in half so they could walk through it on dry ground and then miraculously supplied Israel in the desert with food and meat every day.
- This all happened in the month leading up to Exodus 32, BUT NOW **they think God has abandoned them** because he doesn't send Moses back exactly when they expected.

² So Aaron (Moses's brother, the Campus Pastor of Israel, so to speak) said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." (IOW, the jewelry the Egyptians had given them!)

⁴ And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to (to whom?) the Lord."

- **Important:** It's not like they had "switched teams" altogether. They are still trying to "worship the Lord." In fact, **the bull was something God had told them** to sacrifice in worship to him.
- To ancient peoples, the **bull represented strength, and that's what the Israelites most wanted right then**, so they are attempting to reshape God into a form that guaranteed to them that sense of power and protection they craved.
- **That's what graven images—or counterfeit Gods—almost always do.** They elevate one attribute of God above all the others.

So, vs. 5, Aaron makes the calf and declares "a feast to the Lord" ⁶ **And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings.** ...which are the very things God had told them to use in worship of him! – **So, again**, this is **not brand-new religion**, but the worship of God in a new-and-improved way.)

And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. (The word "play" here in Hebrew has **sexual** connotations.³ After this **new and improved worship** approach, they all got hammered and then got jiggy with it... which is typically not how God prefers his worship services to end. **Any time one of our worship services ends** with a bunch of you with your clothes off, things have not gone according to plan!)

So, God tells Moses... vs. 7, you better get down there. The people have corrupted themselves...

¹⁹ And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

²⁰ He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.

³ Lit. "pagan revelry," which implies orgy. And 1 Cor 10:7–8 certainly implies the sexual connotations.

Then, in 1 of my truly favorite scenes in the Old Testament... Moses says, “Aaron, what have you done?”

²² And Aaron said, “Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, (I love that... “**You know the people, Moses...**” Moses is like, “Yeah, I know the people”) that they are set on evil. ²³ For they said to me, ‘Make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ This is classic passive-aggressiveness. He is very subtly trying to blame Moses! “You were gone a long time, Moses!”

And then, as if his defense couldn’t possibly get any dumber... he says, ²⁴ So I said to them, ‘Let any who have gold take it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and... out came this calf!”

- **Seriously... Is Aaron like in middle school?** “Yeah, just threw it in the fire, and whoa... what do you know? A *golden calf*! You see my situation here, Moses? What was I to do? **We had to worship it.**”
- **I’ve heard some** pretty dumb excuses—remember when Winona Ryder got caught shoplifting and she claimed had told her to try it to prepare for an upcoming role in a movie? Or the Canadian woman who got pulled over for drunk driving and the officer pointed out she was so drunk she was seeing double, and she claimed it was ok because she had been driving with one eye shut to overcome that?⁴
- But **this one by Aaron** is among the worst.

Anyway, all this reveals...

3 Genuine Truths About ‘Counterfeit Gods’ (or graven images’)

1. Counterfeit gods correspond to our fears

- Israel created this image because the **promises of an *invisible* God** were not enough for them, not when there were **real enemies** around and **real needs** to be met.
- They felt like they needed **something more** than God’s promises to protect them.
- **Counterfeit gods always grow out of distrust**—where we feel like we absolutely need something beyond God and his promises, so we reconstruct God in a way that guarantees that he’ll give us those very things.
 - **You get that?** (**Restate**, emphasizing “rather than walking away”)
 - **BTW**, this is how this commandment relates so closely to the 1st commandment. In the 1st commandment, to have no other gods before God, we identify something we need more than God, but rather than reject God altogether, we just reshape God into a form where he guarantees that he will give us that thing in the way that we want it.
- **For example:**
 - **We feel like we have to have money and prosperity** to be happy, so we invent a God that will guarantee that to us. This is called the prosperity gospel—and leads to books like *Your Best Life Now*.
 - Or, **we like to see ourselves as good people**, better than others, so we invent a God who is angrier at the kinds of sins other people struggle with more than he is the kinds of sin we struggle with. This is a lot of conservative, cultural Christianity.
 - **Or, we really need family stability to be happy**, so we invent a God who guarantees that and we’re angry at him if he lets something go wrong.
 - Or, **we want to have unchallenged sexual freedom—so that we can do anything and everything we want so long as it**

⁴ <http://blogs.findlaw.com/blotter/2012/04/top-5-stupid-criminal-excuses.html>

doesn't hurt anybody—so we invent a permissive God who is ok with it. This is the God of liberalism and Jen Hatmaker.

- Or, **I have known people who really want to be out of their marriage**, and they invent a God who is ok with that even though it goes against what God's word says. (Yes, there are places and times the Bible indicates divorce is an acceptable choice, but a lot of people aren't concerned about what the Bible actually says, they just want a God who will justify what they've already made up their mind to do.)
- **I don't mean to imply that this is all your problem and not mine.** This week, just for fun, I made a list of all the ways I have reshaped God over the years to guarantee me something I wanted. **I call it, "Who God Should Be, According to J.D."** It goes something like this:
 - *"If I obey God, nothing bad will ever happen to my family and my church will always prosper and succeed."*
 - *"If I tithe, God will always make me so flush with cash that I can still afford nice things"*
 - *"If I am a good pastor, God will make it so that people will always respect me and like me. I'll never get slandered or falsely accused of anything."*
 - *"If I pray for my kids, God guarantees that they will grow up and love Jesus and marry great spouses who love Jesus... and make lots of money."*
 - *"God will make sure that every person who invented a computer viruses that affect my computer will catch a real virus and die a slow, painful death."*

The tragedy with these counterfeit gods is that when God doesn't do one of these things, we complain that God isn't keeping up his end of the bargain and even suppose that maybe he doesn't even exist!

- The irony of that is we lost faith in a god that never existed in the 1st place—because he was just a projection of our fears and desires!
- Or, **we lose confidence in God** because we evaluate his love according to our made-up terms rather than receiving the love

given to us on his terms. **Just because God doesn't do things the way you think he should doesn't mean** his love and control is not at work in your life.

2. Counterfeit gods corrupt us spiritually

- **Here in this story, their worship of this distorted God lasted** less than a day before they were involved in a full-scale orgy. That's a picture of what happens to us when we worship a false God.
 - **Jeremiah 2:5** tells us that we become like what we worship: **"Israel... strayed far from me. They worshipped worthless idols, and so became worthless."** **Jer 2:5**
 - **"Graven images" distort the real God, which in turn, distort us.**
- The Israelites tried to reduce God down to a single attribute—his strength—the one they felt like they needed at the moment.
- But God **can't be reduced to a single attribute**; his perfection is found in the totality and harmony of all of his attributes.
 - He is infinite in love and strength and infinite in knowledge. And that means that just because he doesn't do things on our time table doesn't mean he's not working a good plan.
 - He is infinitely compassionate but infinitely holy, which means he takes sin seriously even while making a way of escape.
- **Real, healthy spiritual growth comes from seeing** and knowing God... *All* of him, the real him, not *part* of him.
 - **And when you focus on only 1 dimension of God**—your favorite part of God—then you'll grow in a deformed way.
- **For example:**
 - If your god is **holy and just** but not compassionate and gracious, then will be judgmental and a mean religious person.
 - But if your **god is gracious** but not righteous and holy then you'll find yourself always going along with whatever culture finds acceptable, and you'll call acceptable what God calls abominable.
 - If your **god is not fully sovereign**, then when something goes wrong you'll find yourself panicked.

- If **your god is the judge of sin** but not the faithful, redeeming Father of the cross, then you won't be able to shake the feeling that you're condemned and need to prove yourself.
- If **your god is the ruler but not beautiful and all-satisfying in himself**, you'll always find yourself yearning after sin and envious of what people outside the Christian faith get to enjoy.
- **A distorted view of God leads to a distorted spiritual life.** Which is why in the book I say that ***All our spiritual problems go back to a view of God that is distorted, too small.***
- **St. Augustine** said you can identify your wrong views of God by simply tracing **worry, stress,** and **dissatisfaction** in your life back to their source. These things are like **smoke from a fire...**
 - So, **here is my challenge for you** this week. **Do just that:** Find the places of stress, anxiety, bitterness, or unrest in your life...the places where you are most tempted to sin, **trace them back to their source** and I guarantee you they'll come from a graven image of God.
 - **Are you worried?** Embrace his sovereignty.
 - Do you **feel insecure?** Embrace the promises of Christ has chosen you and promised to make you sufficient for whatever task he assigns you.
 - Do you **find yourself being judgmental** a lot? Embrace what the cross teaches you about how sinful you were when God saved you.
 - **Are you not naturally generous?** Think about the generosity God poured out for you when he saved you.
 - **Are you materialistic?** Think about how richer a treasure we possess in him and how little life's treasures matter in light of that.
- **(Incidentally, this is why ADORATION ought to be a part of your prayer time.** As you adore God, you are breaking the power of sin in your life and releasing in yourself a power for holiness!)
- **You become like what you worship.** Psalm 115 says it even more directly: ***Those who make them become like them. Psalm 115:8***

3. Counterfeit gods disappoint us bitterly

- **Maybe the most pathetic part of Israel creating their own "god"** is that they now had the burden of caring for this "god." This golden calf made up of bracelets and navel rings couldn't speak to them or comfort them.
- **He didn't comfort them,** they had to dance for him. He couldn't even move himself from place to place—they had to carry him! The **real God had promised to carry them to the promised land** on eagles' wings (Ex 19:4–5)
- **What a terrible trade!** The true God had promised to supply all their needs, protect them when they were afraid, and satisfy them when they were hungry. He promised never to leave them. One day, he would even give his life to redeem them.
- **They traded this God for a golden calf** they fashioned from their left-over jewelry.
 - **A really interesting picture** is that as a punishment, Moses melts down the gold calf and makes them drink it, and a bunch of them got sick. (32:20)
 - This is **a picture of what worship of a false god** ends up doing to us. Our new god only disappoints us and makes us sick.
 - **Our new gods can't satisfy us.** They aren't big enough or beautiful enough. They are **not GOD enough.**
- **You've got to choose**—a God you can understand and control—who automatically likes what you like and affirms what you affirm, or a God who **sometimes confuses and contradicts you,** but in the end has the power to save and satisfy you.
- **As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD!**

OK, Summit... you in the mood for a classic story? That's one of my go-to stories... but, it illustrates this truth perfectly and I tell it in the book:

A few years ago, I was sitting in a crowded airport waiting area. Our flight had been delayed *again*, and I was trying to get some reading done. I looked up from my book to see the eyes of a friendly, older lady fixed firmly on mine. She asked me what I was reading, and I told her it was a book on Charles Spurgeon. She

said, “**Are you religious?**” I said, “**You might say that.**” Her eyes lit up and she said that she was somewhat of a religious expert, too. She ran a shop on a beach in Florida where she sold religious artifacts she collected from various world religions.

“All religions teach good things,” she said, “And I collect the best from each one. I find something good in them all, and then I try to share that with others, so they can put together the religion that serves them the best.

I said, “Like Burger King? Have it your way?” She said, “Yes.” I thought, “I didn’t really mean that as a compliment.”

We talked for several minutes about what those things were, after which I shared with her my faith in Christ.

“Oh yes,” she said. “Christianity teaches many good things also.” At that point, she reached inside her bag and pulled out a small rosary ring with a crucifix attached to it. “This is what I’ve taken from the Catholics. It reminds me of God’s power, and I always carry it when I travel, because it keeps me safe.”

I was trying to figure out what to say back to that when an elderly lady, sitting across from us, turned to her husband with her newspaper in hand and said in a voice that was loud enough for the dead to hear, “Honey, our horoscope says that our travels will be safe!”

The woman I was talking to immediately turned and said, “Really? That’s great news! My friend here (she pointed to me) is a Christian pastor, so he’ll bring us good luck as we fly, too.” And then, out of nowhere, another guy—a guy I *thought* had been busy with his Sudoku puzzle—leaned forward and said, “I have St. Christopher right here in the bag.”

I looked at him and thought, “What bag? Can he really ride along as a carry-on?”

Sure enough, he reached into his duffle bag and pulled out a foot-high statue of St. Christopher, the patron saint of traveling. The lady I was talking to smiled from ear to ear: “We are sure to have safe travels now—a positive horoscope, my rosary ring, St. Christopher, and a Baptist pastor!”

Seminary did not prepare me for this. I was a little shell-shocked, and just then they called our flight. As we walked down the jet-way together, she handed me the rosary ring and very kindly said, “I want you to have this rosary ring. If you’ll hold onto it when we take off and land, it will keep you safe.”

(MUSIC)

As she placed it in my hand, I couldn’t help but noticing the image of Jesus hanging on the cross engraved on the top. **I prayed, “God, you can’t let the convo end this way...”**

This is the God who promises to hold us in his hand if we’ll submit to him (John 10:29). I am in his hand when I take off, and I’ll be in his hand when I land. And if we happen to blow-up mid-flight, I’ll still be in his hand.

If he holds me tightly in his hand, I don’t have to be so concerned about clinging so tightly to him with mine.⁵

That’s the choice presented to us: a fake god that never confuses and contradicts you, but who ultimately cannot deliver you in the day of trouble—OR THE REAL GOD** who is beyond your understanding and control, sometimes confuses and contradicts you, but has the power to save and sustain you.**

⁵ *Not God Enough*, p. 103.

I love how **Tim Keller** says it: “Only the faith that believes God regarding things it doesn’t want to hear can believe God about the things it desperately *does* want to hear.”⁶

You want to hear acceptance from and have fellowship with the infinitely large God. **That was what you were created for!**

But that God will not just be a reflection of your desires, who wants what you want and is not that much smarter than you. **A God of that size, wisdom, purity and love** will often contradict you, confuse you, make you mad, and routinely blow your mind.

So, that’s your choice: *A god small enough to be understood or a God big enough to be worshipped!*

PRAYER

Are you in a posture of humble surrender toward him—believing what he says even about the hard things, the difficult things, the things you find disagreeable and offensive—or are you supposing that you can come up with an image of him that is better than the real thing?

⁶ Keller says, “If our hearts do not learn to trust God’s word when it tells us things we don’t want to hear, then it won’t accept it when it tells us things I desperately *do* want to hear—about love and forgiveness.” Tim and Kathy Keller, *The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Reading in the Psalms*, February 27, p. 58

Bullpen:

- If you **worship money**, you become materialistic and anxious all the time about your savings
- If you **worship family**, you become co-dependent and obsessive about your children... and you annoy the heck out of them
- If you **worship romance**, then you are always desperate for attention, or depressed that you're not in a good relationship, or dissatisfied with your marriage.

How can you experience deep change in your heart when God is simply the product of your heart?

A God who only tells us what we want to hear will never be able to tell us the things we truly need to hear.

Chapter Outline:

- Berta
- “You don’t get your own personal Jesus”
- Biography
- Difference in 1st and 2nd commandment
- Exodus 32 illustration
- How we do it:
 - Jefferson
 - 90 day fiancée
 - Karl Barth quote
- Spiritual deformity
- Examples in our lives
- St. Augustine: smoke from a fire
- Who is carrying whom?
- Rosary ring

- So why today do we assume that everything in us that feels right—every sexual ethic, every moral choice—is right? in us we assume the Bible’s sexual ethics can’t be right because if we desire a certain sexual preference, and if we feel it, it must be right and correspond to our true selves.
 - I think I’ve told you that one of the most interesting things to me when I lived overseas in a Muslim culture was observing how the Bible offended them, just in totally different ways it did us: John 8
 - *Why do we assume everyone else’s instincts need to be corrected but not ours?*
 - The Bible is an equal opportunity offender.
- I can confidently say that if God’s Word is not making you mad, you are not worshipping the real God, just a graven image that you have constructed that is more a reflection of you than it is of him.
- God takes this kind of distortion of him very seriously he says, **vs. 4–5, and it will have** negative effects **“to the third and fourth generation”** which is another way of saying that it will damage not only us but those who learn about God from us—like our kids.

- **God gets to define himself...** That means we have to conform our conceptions of God to what he has revealed about himself, and not *visa versa*. That shouldn't be that revolutionary but, in our culture, it is. Does saying that, that you don't get to choose what you want to believe about God... does that sound narrow minded to you? Think of it like this:
- Suppose someone came up to you and said... I want to write a biography of you... flattered. In my biography of you, you are an **astronaut**; you're really, really **bad at** relationships and so you live with **18 cats** because no one will date you. Uhhh... I'm **scared of heights**, I consider myself **pretty nice**, and I'm more of a **dog person**." *"But this is how I prefer to see you..."* You're much more interesting this way." You'd be offended, because they don't like you as you are.
- Well, it's the same way with God. We can't just remake God into what we want God to be. God is who he is.
- Psychologists say that sometimes we distort our view of someone in our lives, and re-imagine them different than they are, because subconsciously we need them to be a certain way to feel secure or loved. We have to be loved on our terms or in ways that make sense to us. It makes for a terrible marriage.
 - It makes for an even worse relationship with God.
 - We start saying, "God, only if you do this will I believe this."
 - Only if you are this way, can I be happy.