

## INSIGHT

All religions acknowledge that humanity suffers from some form of bondage. The forerunners of religious movements apart from the Bible have beckoned “freedom” through series of steps toward “liberation” or some form of “enlightenment” to bring one’s self out of bondage. How different is Biblical religion! Since the beginning, God has always shown and reminded His people that He is their Liberator and Justifier, and that He alone can bring them out of bondage. Our Lord is the only Being in existence that can give us freedom from sin.

*I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high. Lev 26:12-13*

Biblical religion is also unique in its exclusivity. God, and God alone can save. He is the very center of our salvation. He calls us to walk beside Him. To walk as He does; to be holy as He is holy. He defines the perimeter of our walk with Him and teaches us accountability.

No wonder that the practice of other religions and/or beliefs have no effect on the human heart! Other religious ideologies are completely powerless because they preach liberation by your own merit. They say that salvation and the knowledge to freedom is within you.

*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

**John 14:6**

Jesus is the ONLY way to salvation, even to a personal relationship with God. No other religion even imagines a personal relationship with deity except for Biblical religion. Mohammed never said that he was the way; Bhudda always told his followers that they had to find the path to enlightenment themselves; and other so-called religious preachers and teachers pervert the gospel with rules and regulations to freedom. Jesus always made Himself the very issue of His teachings. He calls us to *abide in Him, to follow Him and to hope in Him.* He teaches faith and grace. He is the reason for our singing, our praying and our persevering. He is the reason to live!

*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

**Acts 4:12**

***The Heart of God: The First Commandment***

## God as Center & Circumference

**Key Text:**

**Exodus 20:3**

*"You shall have no other gods before Me."*

**Theme:**

The first commandment sets the stage for the attitude necessary to understand the nine that follow. If God is truly God, then all that He says is true and is to be obeyed. If God is truly God, then we are safe within His dominion and parameters. All who belong to Him and consecrate themselves as His covenant people are safeguarded from evil. The first commandment is not only first in sequence, but also first in priority. The Lord, God, our deliverer, does not accept a peripheral role in our lives. He won't serve as an occasional troubleshooter or bail us out of trouble only to be forgotten when things are "going good". He is everything to us, or nothing at all. "He neither seeks nor will He accept a position short of sovereignty in our lives."

**Application:**

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Pray daily to God!** Submit every aspect of your life to the Lord. Let Him work wonders in those difficult areas of your life!
2. **Surrender your desires & demands!** Make God's desires and demands the center and circumference of your life! Know your Lord!
3. **Be dazzled by God!** Begin each day with a prayer to be in sync with the Spirit. Let God amaze you by what He accomplishes through your devotion to Him. Be thankful and content with everything!
4. **Develop a godly fear!** Be aware that God is really with you and that He has saved you! Make Him the focus and center of your everyday activities!

**May the Lord richly bless you!**

**SERMON OUTLINE**

## **Making God our Center & our Circumference**

To make the Lord our Circumference we first need to make Him the Center of our lives

### **I. The 1st Commandment demands our attention**

1. God has never held back from you *Romans 8:32*
2. What are you holding back from God?

### **II. The 1st Commandment demands our focus**

*Phillipians 3:8-9*

1. Where is your focus? What are your dreams?
2. Do you see yourself as part of God's plan or do you have your own plan?
3. How much have you given up for the sake of knowing your Lord? What's getting in the way?

### **III. The 1st Commandment demands our zeal**

*Romans 12:9-21*

1. The commitment needs to be die-hard
2. The integrity needs to be consistent
3. The desire for Him needs to be always fresh

If the Lord is the center of your life, then your perimeter is God's Kingdom—Everything will revolve around it!

### **IV. Circumference is Discipleship**

*Luke 14:25-35*

1. Going beyond rituals
2. Going beyond consumerism
3. Our conscience always needs to be exposed and be self-corrective. *2 Tim 1:7*

### **V. Circumference is Total-Life Obedience**

*1 Corinthians 15:58*

1. Changing our viewpoint from having religion to being religious.
2. Making God the shelf and our desires and goals the knick-knacks.
3. Have you realized where you are and what you've been called to?

When you gather on Sunday for assembly (services), are you always filled with a sense of awe about your spiritual surroundings? How do you view your surroundings? Are you always aware of the presence of the Lord?

*See To It*

*Hebrews 12:18-29*

1. What is being used as a point of reference in verses 18-21? See *Exodus 19:16-25; 20:1-21*

2. What made the Israelite encampment at Mt. Sinai so terrifying?

3. How is what we have now better than what the Israelites experienced? How is it different experience? How is it a similar experience?

4. Verses 25 -29 contain an admonishment (warning). If you were an Israelite in the time of Moses, how would you have taken this warning and your experience of the Holy God?

5. Do you believe that the Earth will be shaken once more? How can we prevent ourselves from being shaken and destroyed when that happens?

6. How are we to acknowledge the fact that we are in an unshakable Kingdom? (verse 28)

*Seeing It Closer:*

1. What kinds of things distract you from picturing the description of the Kingdom in Hebrews 12?

2. Do you at times have difficulty accepting the fact that you are part of Heaven's awesome plan? What kind of things do you doubt?

3. Do you sincerely believe that you are walking the narrow and difficult path? How do you know this?

*Getting To It:*

Pray that we may be open to weeding out anything that may get in our way of devotion to our One and Only True God!

## **SMALL GROUP STUDY**

*Warm-up:*