

The First Commandment

Thou shalt have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

1. What is the fear of God? *Ecclesiastes 12:13–14; Isaiah 8:11–18; Luke 23:39–43; Acts 13:26–27, 38–41; Rev 14:6–7; 1 Pet 2:13–25.*
2. If sinners are to love God, who must make the first move, and what must be dealt with? *1 John 3:16; 4:13–17; John 3:12–21.*
3. Can we ever look at this commandment and say that it has nothing on us? *John 16:29–33; Gal 2:11–14; Mark 9:24.*
4. What is the root of the keeping of this commandment, and all the commandments? (That is, apart from this, not one commandment can truly be kept.) *Rom 1:16–17; 6:1–14; 14:23; Eph 2:1–10.*

From Luther's *Large Catechism* (I: Ten Commandments)

¹ That is: Thou shalt have [and worship] Me alone as thy God. What is the force of this, and how is it to be understood? What does it mean to have a god? or, what is God? Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe Him from the [whole] heart; as I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust be right, then is your god also true; and, on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God; for these two belong together, faith and God. That now, I say, upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god...

⁵⁻⁸ This I must unfold somewhat more plainly, that it may be understood and perceived by ordinary examples of the contrary. Many a one thinks that he has God and everything in abundance when he has money and, possessions; he trusts in them and boasts of them with such firmness and assurance as to care for no one. Lo, such a man also has a god, Mammon by name, i.e., money and possessions, on which he sets all his heart, and which is also the most common idol on earth. He who has money and possessions feels secure, and is joyful and undismayed as though he were sitting in the midst of Paradise. On the other hand, he who has none doubts and is despondent, as though he knew of no God...

¹⁶ Lo, here you have the meaning of the true honor and worship of God, which pleases God, and which He commands under penalty of eternal wrath, namely, that the heart know no other comfort or confidence than in Him, and do not suffer itself to be torn from Him, but, for Him, risk and disregard everything upon earth.