Our scripture this morning comes from Exodus 20:1-6. While you’re finding that, John went to his boss early Monday morning. “Boss, can I speak with you?” “Sure – come in.” “I went to church yesterday and the preacher announced that the church was having a clean-up day this Saturday and he wants everyone to attend and clean up around God’s house.” The boss frowned, “I’m sorry John, you know we’re short-handed and I can’t give you Saturday off.” John broke into a radiant smile, “Thanks boss! I knew I could count on you.”

**Exodus 20:1-6 And God spoke all these words, saying: 2“I *am* the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3“You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; 5you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, 6but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**

Roses in God’s garden – reverent, obedient, self-controlled, and enduring. For the last few weeks, we’ve been talking about these characteristics. Reverence provides the border that defines our relationship with God. Our relationship with God will never grow beyond the limits of the reverence that we hold for God – when we think that God’s commandment is a good suggestion – something we’ll consider… when we think of God’s church as a place to be when we have nothing better planned… when we think of God’s plan as the fallback position, we need not wonder why God isn’t working in our lives.

We talked last time about reverence for God. Reverence is awe. As we left two weeks ago, I asked that we all examine our reverence for God – the awe with which we hold Him. We cannot rise to the heights God has planned for us, until we hold God with the reverence He expects of us. This world is focused on tearing down our reverence for God. It started in the garden when the serpent questioned God’s instructions concerning the fruit and it hasn’t stopped. If Satan can change our view of God’s power, God’s position, and God’s plan, temptation and sin will surely follow.

Today, we’ll look at the firstness of God, our focus on God, and our fidelity to God. Look at verse 3 - **“You shall have no other gods before Me.”** God didn’t stutter there did He? There can be no argument where God is to rank in our life. Some will say – I can reverence God and not attend church. Hebrews 10:25 causes me to disagree with that - not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another,* and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. Reverence demands that God be first. When there is nothing before God, that means He is first. How first is God in our lives? Is He first after the basketball game, the vacation plans, the job, the children, the bank account? If there is anything ahead of God, He is not first. Reverence demands that God be first.

When God is first, He is our focus. Look at verse 4 & 5 **“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; 5you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.** Anything that draws our attention from God is an idol. Anything that interferes with our right relationship with God is an idol and sin. Some struggle with this image so let me give a different image – you’re sitting with your spouse in a restaurant. You notice that your spouse is intently focused – you look… and your spouse is staring a very attractive person at the next table, smiling, and making googly eyes with them… You’re not the focus… that other person is! What does that make you feel? How many of you would I be visiting in jail or talking to about forgiveness and not divorce? When God is first, He must be the focus. Listen to God with that thought in your mind - **For I, the Lord your God, *am* a jealous God!** He won’t be second. Reverence is about putting God first, making Him our focus.

When God is first and we are focused, we demonstrate fidelity. Verse 6 - **but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.** Fidelity is faithfulness. God keeps fidelity with those **who love Me and keep My commandments**. It doesn’t say – those who say they love Me and know my commandments. We must act with fidelity towards God. James 4:8 says – Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. What is the level of our fidelity to God? When He is first and our focus, our fidelity will follow.

This week – consider if God is really first in life? No one but you and God – Is He first? Is He the focus or are you making eyes at other things? What level of fidelity is God receiving? How faithful to prayer and Bible study and service? 1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. Reverence for God demands firstness, focus, and fidelity – let’s examine our walk this week with an eye toward these.