

God to Me

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[0 : 00] Let's hear it.

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[1 : 35] Let's hear it. Let's hear it. Let's hear it. Let's hear it. Let's hear it.

Let's hear it. Let's hear it. Let's hear it. Wanted to be so much like him that we would wear the shoes that he wore.

We would wear anything that had Michael Jordan on it. We drank Gatorade because that was the drink of Michael Jordan.

And I'll remember in third grade, I had this t-shirt, first thing I ever got, that had Michael Jordan on it. And it was a picture of him, and he was dunking a basketball with his trademark tongue hanging out of his mouth.

And then underneath that picture, it said, just another day at the office. And here's the thing, in third grade, I had no idea what that meant. Just another day, okay, whatever, it's got Michael Jordan on it, right?

[2 : 32] And so all the adults would kind of laugh at it, but to me, I didn't care. It had his airness on it, and that's all that mattered to me. And if I could have, I tell you, in third grade, I would have worn that shirt every single day if my mom would have let me, even when it was cold outside.

And here's the thing about me and my friends. We knew just about everything there was to know about Michael Jordan. We knew where he went to high school. We knew where he went to college. We knew why he wore the number 23. We knew what he liked. We knew what he disliked. We knew all of his stats, all of his team awards, all his individual awards.

But none of us actually knew Michael Jordan. None of us actually knew him. You know, you can know a lot about a person, but just because you know a lot about that person, it doesn't mean that you truly know who they are.

So, say for example, I know a lot about Michael Jordan. Say for some reason, God has our paths to cross.

[3 : 42] And I go up to him and I say, hey, Mike, you remember when I was in third grade, I wore that t-shirt with you on it all the time. And it said, just another day at the office, remember?

That, and all the adults laughed. I didn't know what it was about. But that was pretty neat, wasn't it? And you know what Michael Jordan would do? Get out of here.

Get away from me, weirdo. Right? Where's my security? Haul him away. Because even though I knew a lot about Michael Jordan, or I know a lot about him, I should say, I don't really know who he is.

I don't know him in that way. I don't have a relationship with him. And knowing a lot about somebody doesn't mean that you have a relationship with that person. And so when we come to Matthew 7, verses 21 through 23, that is one of the most chilling passages, I think, in Scripture. Let's look at it together. Jesus, talking about that great day of judgment, says, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

[4 : 50] On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, saying it twice as if they know him, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?

And this is the chilling part. And I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

And what makes this so chilling is the fact that this is going to happen. There's no doubt about that. That this day will come, and that response will be given. These are real events that will take place. There will be people on that day who believe that they know Jesus. Look, it says, they say, we've spoken for you.

It's appeared that you've done supernatural things through your empowering us. Other people have seen those things, and they've thought that we're with you, that we know you too.

[5 : 59] But the truth will be revealed to them that they never truly knew him. They make Jesus into what they wanted him to be.

They used Jesus to advance their own personal and political agendas. They used him, probably, to make a name for themselves.

But they never knew him as their Lord and as their Savior. In Hosea chapter 8, God explains that Israel has had a history of claiming to know him.

But their conduct told another story. That the truth, the reality was that their hearts were far from him. And in verses 5 and 6, God mentions a calf.

And in order for us to understand this passage, we must understand the significance of God's bringing that calf to Israel's attention at this point in time in their history.

[7 : 02] There is a truth here. A truth that I believe is incredibly important for us to understand today and apply to our lives. I think that this message is incredibly important.

Not just for you and me and this church, but for the church of Jesus Christ. And I hope that you'll listen to this sermon and draw the same conclusion. Do you remember the golden calf?

Do you remember how that got started? Let's look at Exodus 32. Read along with me. When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, right? God had led them out of Egypt through the pillar of fire by day, through the cloud at night.

He had rescued them. He had saved them from slavery. Moses goes up to receive the Ten Commandments from God. And this is what happens in the meanwhile. The people saw that Moses was delayed to come down from the mountain.

So they gathered themselves together to Aaron and they 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 don't know what has become of him.

[8 : 06] So Aaron said to him, take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons and your daughters and bring them to me. So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron.

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. And when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And this is important. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.

Capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D, the name of Yahweh. And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and they rose up to play.

So we've got to understand that Aaron is not saying here, hey, you guys know that Yahweh, God, God, the one that Moses met with, that one who rescued us from slavery, that God who parted the Red Sea for us.

[9 : 20] Well, it turns out, everybody, that's not really who it was that whole time. It was a different God. It was this one. That's not. That's not what Aaron was saying.

No, Aaron says to them after making the calf, tomorrow will be a feast to the Lord using the covenant name of God, Yahweh.

The golden calf wasn't so much a violation of the first commandment, but it was more a violation of the second. So let's review.

Commandment number one says, you shall have no other gods before me. Right? That commandment rules out any form of worship for any other thing other than the one true and living God.

Commandment number two says, you shall not make for yourself a carved image or 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.

[10:26] That's commandment number two. So the first commandment forbids us from having any other gods before God, any other God besides God.

The second commandment forbids us from making graven images. And so you might be saying, well, it kind of sounds like to me, Pastor Mike, that they're saying the same thing, aren't they? Well, yes and no. Let me explain. The first commandment sufficiently, I should say, rules out the worship of anything other than God himself.

Whether you do that through the use of graven images doesn't matter. The second commandment explores a different issue, though. It forbids the worship of the true God through the use of images. Now, most of us, living in a first world culture or society, we're not inclined to bowing down before statues.

[11:36] So we might be tempted to think, you know what? We've gotten past that second commandment one. We don't do that anymore. We're too sophisticated for stuff like that in our society. But if we're willing to be honest, if we're willing to be honest, I think we can all confess to the fact that we are guilty of constructing gods of the things that we most desire in this world.

For some, that's money. For others, it's a new car. For others, it's a good reputation. And so on and so forth.

We are all prone to doing that. But again, those things have to do with violating the first commandment more so than the second.

Here's the issue. And this is the point that I hope to get at. We break the second commandment when we seek to worship the true God through images.

Including images of him that we form and fashion in our own minds and hearts. And you've got to understand as well that back in Hosea's day, and even today in primitive societies in the world, where statues are venerated, where they are given worship, they serve primarily as aids in worship.

[13:09] They see that statue, they see that image as kind of like an avatar. A representation of the God whom they're worshipping. And they use that image as a conduit to worship whomever image that God displays.

Whatever image is portrayed through that statue. The second commandment is broken all over the place today.

And especially in the United States of America. And especially in the churches in the United States of America. Claiming to worship the one true and living God.

But in reality, what is being worshipped is an image of him that's been constructed in the minds. In the hearts of those who are truthfully far from God.

And how do we know when that's the case? Well, I think we know it's the case when we hear statements that begin like this. God to me.

[14:20] God to me. And this is how we often hear this. For example, you can take any of the hot button issues that are facing our society today.

And you can take a stance on those issues that matches what scripture has to say about that issue. And when you've done that. Or you've seen somebody do that.

You've probably heard somebody say in response to that. Well, you know what? That doesn't sound like God to me. God to me.

God to me. He is a all loving force. Who accepts everyone and everything. And he wouldn't allow anyone. To be going to hell.

To be punished for their sin. That doesn't sound like God to me. God to me. Makes every day like a Friday. When people say things like God to me.

[15:20] It should come as no surprise to us that the form. That they are seeking to press God into. The model. That they are trying to shape God into.

The person. Who they want God most to be like. Is themselves. They want God to be like them. Then. Sometimes this God to me way of thinking.

Weeds its way into evangelical churches. And it shows up most often. In our theological debates. With one another. You see it in those debates.

When someone says something like this. I could never worship a God who. You fill in the blank. If what follows. Is something that actually describes.

The God of the Bible. Then such a confession. Is a confession. That you never. You could never worship. The true God of the Bible. When we say.

[16:18] I prefer to focus on the more gentle God. Of the New Testament. You hear people say that. Right. Let's unhitch ourselves. From the Old Testament. Let's focus on the New Testament. Seems like there's a whole lot more grace. Going on there.

Well we forget. That the only innocent person. Who has ever lived in this world. Was. Killed. In the New Testament. Was crucified.

For our sins. When we say. That we prefer to focus on a more gentle God. What we are saying is. I prefer. This kind of God.

This God. To me. The second commandment. Commands. That we worship God. As he is. Not. As who we wish. Him. To be. And so construct. An image of him. In our hearts. And in our minds. That makes us comfortable.

[17:15] This is the sin. That God says. Israel was guilty of committing. In Hosea chapter 8. It is a sin. That many. Evangelical churches. Are guilty.

Of breaking today. And if we're not careful. We could be. Easily become one of those churches. And it's most often.

Clearly broken. In those kind of churches. That develop. A consumer. Christianity. Model. Seeking to make God. Appeal.

More to people. So that they'll want to come. To church. So you know what. In order to do that. We won't talk about sin. We won't talk about. Your need.

To repent. We're going to. Spend our time. Talking primarily. About you. And primarily. About how much God. Loves. And accepts you. Just as you are.

[18:10] But you know. What's happening. When that's the case. A role reversal. Is taking place. What people. Are being told. In those kind of situations. Is this. You don't exist.

To worship God. God exists. To worship you. You don't exist. To serve God. God exists. To serve you. That's the message.

Of the prosperity gospel. When you boil it down. Basically. What they're saying. Is you know what. We're going to teach you. How to manipulate God. To get what you want.

When what is. Really happening. Happening. Is those teachers. Are manipulating. Those people. To get what they really want. From them. Which is their money. Which is.

Notoriety. Which is to have high book sales. Right. Unfortunately. This attitude. Characterized. That of Jeroboam. Jeroboam.

[19:05] Who was the first king. Of the northern. Kingdom. Of Israel. And after the split. From the southern kingdom. Of Judah. This is what. Jeroboam. Dead. First kings. Twelve.

Twenty five. Thirty three. It's long. Let's read it together. It will help us to understand. Then Jeroboam. Built Shechem. In the hill country. Of Ephraim. And he lived there. And he went out. From there. And built Peniel.

And Jeroboam. Said in his heart. Now the kingdom. Will turn back. To the house of David. If this people. Go up. To offer sacrifices. In the temple. Of the Lord. At Jerusalem.

Which is located. In the southern kingdom. Then the heart. Of this people. Will turn again. To their Lord. To Rehoboam. The king of Judah. And they will kill me. And they will return.

Rehoboam. To king of Judah. So the king. Took counsel. And he made two calves. Of gold. And he said.

[19:59] To the people. You have gone up. To Jerusalem. Long enough. Behold. Your gods. O Israel. Who brought you up. Out of the land. Of Egypt. Sound familiar?

And he set one. In Bethel. And the other. He put. In Dan. Then this thing. Became a sin. For the people. Went as far as Dan.

To be before one. He also made temples. On high places. And he appointed priests. From among all. The people. Who were not. Of the Levites. And Jeroboam.

Appointed a feast. Of the fifteenth day. Of the eighth month. Like the feast. That was in Judah. And he offered. Sacrifices. On the altar. So he. So he did in Bethel. Sacrificing to the calves.

That he had made. And he placed in Bethel. The priests. Of the high places. That he had made. He went up to the altar. That he had made in Bethel. On the fifteenth day.

[20:53] In the eighth month. In the month. That he had devised. From his own heart. And he instituted. A feast. For the people of Israel. And went up to the altar. To make offerings.

You see what's happening here. Jeroboam. Was afraid. At this point in time. That the people. Would be.

Reunited. By their. Worshiping. Together. In the place. Where God. Designated for them. To go. And to worship. Him. And he didn't want that. He didn't want. The kingdom. To be reunited. He wanted to keep it apart. Because he wanted. To keep his power. He wanted to continue. On as king. So. What he decided to do. Was devise. A new religious system. To do that. The people. Would think. That they were still. Worshipping God. But the religious system. And order.

[21 : 47] Would be completely. Under his control. So the calves. That he made. Were symbols. Of Yahweh. Not some other God. And that must be. Carefully noted. As we understand. What God wants.

To teach. Us today. Jeroboam. Like many people. Today. Was using. God. He was using. God. Creating God. Into an image. That was comfortable. For him. An image. That he could use. To meet. His personal. Agendas.

And so here's the main. Idea from this morning. Sermon. A warning. God will not. Be subject. To human efforts. To recreate him.

In an image. They are comfortable with. In order to serve. Their personal agendas. God will not. Allow it to happen. Jeroboam.

[22 : 41] Sinned. And in doing this. He. Plagued his people. Throughout. The rest. Of their history. The bible says. That his sin. Led to their sin. And eventually. It led to their demise.

As a nation. Wherever. Wherever. Jeroboam's. Name is mentioned. After that event. That we just read. This is what follows. It says. Jeroboam. Who made. Israel.

To sin. Man. That's a horrible way. To be remembered. Is it not? Jeroboam. Who made. Other. People. Sin.

Sin. But it's something. That we have to pay. Close attention to. Lest. We. Like Jeroboam. Present. God. In such a way. That makes. People. Comfortable. But will. In the end. Lead their families. Their churches.

[23 : 36] And our society. Down a path. To believing. Things. Things. About God. To assuming. Things. About him. That are. Not. True. So there's two applications here.

There's two dangers. That I want to bring to your attention. Two dangers. Of constructing God. Into an image. That makes you comfortable. With sin. And who exists. To serve. Your own. Personal agenda.

And the first danger. Is this. God will not. Be used. As an instrument. To secure. Another's. Agenda. God.

Will not. Be used. As an instrument. To secure. Another's. Another's. Agenda. Look. The great commission. Is clear. It's clear.

Jesus says to us. That we are his instruments. And that he is going to use us. To secure his agenda. Not the other way around.

[24 : 34] God. We are his instruments. He is not ours. So here's the problem with Israel. Back in Hosea chapter 8. Which is often the problem for many churches again today.

And it's this. That we treat God. Like many sports teams. Treat their mascot. Not. The mascot for the Kansas City Royals.

Is Slugger. And you have to. You get the gurr in there. Right. Because he's a lion. Now here's the thing about Slugger. He's.

He's got this big fixed smile. Big googly eyes. He's plush. And he's fuzzy. And he's cuddly. Kids love him.

Love to have their picture taken with Slugger. Love to have Slugger's autograph. And Slugger has a job. With the Royals. His job is to dance on the dugout from time to time.

[25 : 34] Interact with the people. Motivate the fans to cheer for the team. But in reality. Slugger makes no difference. On whether or not the Royals win or lose on the field.

The manager for the Kansas City Royals. Isn't calling Slugger into his office before the game. And say hey who do you think should start at third base today. Or who do you think.

Who do you think I should bring out of the bullpen first. I really want to know your opinion. Slugger doesn't do that. Slugger doesn't bat. Slugger doesn't pitch. Slugger doesn't play.

He's a mascot. In many churches. In many Christians. Treat God. As if he was a mascot.

In very much the same way. Not consulting him in prayer. When they make decisions. No concern about sin.

[26 : 34] And its consequences. Or his judgment of it. They see him. And many churches portray him. As this big. Soft. Cuddly.

Teddy bear. Now imagine. That the Royals decide to change things up. And they say you know what this year. Instead of Slugger.

As our mascot. We're going to bring in a real lion. We're going to bring in a real lion. And we're going to let him walk out of the bullpen. And just kind of roam around. How would people respond to that?

Well they'd run. Right? Many of them would hide. Why? Because they would have a healthy fear. And respect for what this lion. Is capable of doing.

It's awesome. To go to the zoo. And if you're able to see a lion up close. The lion is powerful. Makes me think of C.S. Lewis.

[27 : 40] In the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. Remember? And Aslan in that character. Portrays Christ. Remember one of the children. I believe it was Lucy. She was asking about this lion.

She asked Mr. Beaver. You know. Is he safe? And Mr. Beaver. No he's not safe. No he's not safe. But he's good.

Man he's good. Jesus is the Lion of Judah. And in such a same way. We are not to regulate God to the sidelines. God is holy.

God is almighty. God is the Ancient of Days. God is the Ancient of Days. By him all things exist. Because he spoke it into being. And he holds it together.

At this very moment. By his power. That's awesome to think about. Is it not? God is awesome. We should never.

[28 : 39] Relegate him to the sidelines. When it comes to how we will live our lives. When it comes to how we will run our families. When it comes to how we will run our churches. And so we shouldn't try to take the edge off of his word.

And be afraid that we might step on people's toes. And make them feel uncomfortable. We must speak the truth. In love. Israel had regulated God to the sidelines.

They went through all the religious motions. But God knew where their hearts truly were. And so there we see that they cry out to him. In their time of despair.

In verse 2. As if they have known him all this time. But they did not know him. Because God says they had long ago spurned the good. They wanted God on their own terms.

They thought they knew better than God. When it came to running their own country. When it came to conducting their own business affairs. But in the end. God reveals to them that they will reap what they've sown.

[29 : 46] The enemy shall pursue them. Sometimes we are tempted to do the same thing in the church. We're tempted to think.

You know God. You're old. Times have changed. And if we're going to reach people with the gospel for you.

We can't do it this way anymore. It just doesn't work. You seem too mean. Or you seem too judgmental. We want to present an image of you that people will like.

That will appeal to their sinful hearts. So just sit over there. We'll talk about you.

We'll pray to you. We'll sing about you. But just get out of our way. Because we know what we're doing. Man, it is dangerous. To hold such a perspective.

[30 : 48] Of almighty God. That we know better than him. And that we're in a position to tell him what to do. Peter shows us that.

How dangerous that is. Peter reveals to us the folly of this way of thinking. And many of us are guilty of doing it. Matthew 16, 21 through 25. From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes. And be killed. And on the third day he would be raised. Peter somehow missed that point. And he took it upon himself. To take our Lord aside.

Can you imagine? And rebuked him. Saying, Far be it from you, Lord. This shall never happen to you.

But he turned. And he said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me.

[31 : 51] For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. And Jesus set him and all his disciples and us straight.

He says, If anyone would come after me, Don't tell me what to do. Don't relegate me to the sidelines. Deny yourself. Take up your cross.

And you follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose him. But whoever loses his life, for my sake, he'll be the one who finds it.

So my question to you is this. Are you attempting to use God? Or is God using you? Make sure that you're clear on how you answer that question.

And I'll tell you, I regularly have to pray this. This is what I pray. On a regular basis. God, whatever you want me to do, I will do it. And you know why I pray that prayer regularly?

[32 : 53] Because I need to be reminded, I need to remind myself, Hey, whatever God tells you to do, you're going to do that. You have to do that.

Because we are his instruments. Whom he uses to secure his will. To do his work. He is not our instrument that we use to try to secure our wills.

And to secure our own agenda. Second danger. God will destroy all false images of himself. He's patient.

He's long-suffering. But a time will come when those images will be destroyed. They will be cast down. They will be shattered into a million pieces.

Israel made their own kings. They developed their own policies. They formed their own alliances. And they never once thought to consult God about any of it. Jeroboam had made these calves.

[33 : 50] He had devised a system of religion in his heart. Though he claimed that it was done for God, the truth was, in reality, he did it for himself. The God whom he truly served.

The God whom he truly enshrined in his heart was himself. And he encouraged the people to do the same. If we seek to use God to serve our own agendas and relegate him to the sidelines of our lives, then one day, you can be assured that it will all come crashing down.

Matthew 7, 24 through 27. Jesus' warning, concluding the Sermon on the Mount, everyone who hears these words of mine and who does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew, the feet on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

And the rain fell, and the floods came, the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell. And great was the fall of it.

[35 : 18] I want to conclude by asking you this simple question. Who is God to you? Who is God to you? And you must answer in this way.

God to me is the God whom he's revealed himself to be in his word through his son. God to me is the creator of the heavens and the earth.

God to me is the God He formed and made these things simply by speaking them. He created it all and He declared that it was good.

And I understand from the Bible that Adam and Eve sinned when they disobeyed God. And as a result of that, this good and perfect design that God has made has come under a curse.

The curse of sin. Don't you see this? I mean, this is an easy argument for me to make whenever I try to share the gospel with people. Look at what sin is doing to this world.

[36 : 42] Look at what it's done to you in your life. Look at what it's done to the people around you in their lives. We are born with a sin nature and if you don't believe it, volunteer at a daycare somewhere and you will see that one thing we don't have to teach kids to do is how to be bad.

It comes instinctively. We sin. And the world is broken as a result of it.

And God would be just if he decided to say, you know what? You chose sin. You have it your way.

And see what happens. It ain't gonna be pretty. God to me, as revealed through his word, took on flesh. He came from heaven in the form of a man.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, fully man, fully God. Completely unaffected by sin. Just like us in every way, but without sin.

[37 : 58] And he lived the perfect sinless life that you and I are incapable of living. And he willingly died on the cross in our place for our sins that we might be forgiven.

That all that's been broken inside of us could be restored. That we could reclaim God's original design for us to be with him forever. Forever. And he willingly died on the cross for our sins.

And while he hung there, the wrath of God towards his people was poured out fully upon him. He was bruised for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. But by his wounds, the Bible says that we are healed. On the third day, he arose from the grave.

convincing proof that he was truly, in fact, God. That he truly did sufficiently atone for our sins.

[39 : 16] And the good news of the gospel is that if we believe that truth, if we confess that with our mouths, the Bible says that we are saved.

You don't have to go on some kind of journey to find some location to destroy your sin. Jesus has done it. You don't have to work your way by making sure that when you die that the scales are tipped in your favor with good deeds.

That doesn't matter. Jesus has fully accomplished your righteousness. And the amazing thing is that we sinners, when we believe Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior, we confess that truth with our mouth.

The Bible says that we have been clothed with his righteousness. So now when God sees us, he no longer sees a sinner, but he sees his son. He sees a righteous person. He doesn't see somebody who's just innocent of committing sin.

He sees somebody, he sees us as if we never, ever sinned before. Is that good news? Man, that's the greatest news in the world.