

Is It Wrong To Have Images?

Out of the ten commandments, the second commandment—Exodus 20:4-5 states: “You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve (worship) them....”

According to this commandment, is it therefore wrong to have an image (statue, picture, painting, etc.) of even an animal such as a dog or a cat? Or how about a picture of a beautiful landscape (such as the sun setting over the ocean)? Would all of these be considered an idol and therefore wrong according to this prohibition? No, they are not idols and are perfectly fine to have in our homes. Why? The intended meaning of this commandment is that we don't make any images (statues, pictures, paintings, etc.) for the purpose of using them to help us to worship God (or someone or something else). We are also not to use them as an aid or tool in worshipping God (such as having a picture or statue of Jesus or Mary). God doesn't want us to do this nor do we need it.

On the contrary, God wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). This means worshipping God according to His Word, according to what He says in the pages of the Bible (and that means not having physical aids to help us in our worship of God). And worshipping God in spirit and in truth involves worshipping God with the help of His Holy Spirit, in order to lead and direct us to live our lives according to God's will.

To also help prove my original point—that we can have images (pictures, statues, etc.) of things that are not religious in nature—consider the following command from Jesus Christ. “Do not call

anyone on earth your father” (Matthew 23:9). Does this mean we can not call our physical father on earth “father?” Of course not! This of course is not referring to calling our physical father “father,” but it is referring to calling someone (other than God) our *spiritual or religious father* (such as calling a priest, “father”). The same thing applies to calling people master, teacher, rabbi, etc. (see Matthew 23:8-12).

So just as it is perfectly fine to call our physical dad “father,” it is also perfectly fine to have images in our homes (just as long as they have absolutely nothing to do with worshipping God or anyone or anything else).