

Take-Home

The One-Liners

Unless Someone Guides Me

Module Three

What We Found

Nearly every short objection is answered by a second passage the objector has not weighed. Call no man father sits in a paragraph, Matthew 23:8-10, that also forbids the titles rabbi and master and reserves teacher to Christ, and Paul calls himself both a father and a teacher. The warning about empty phrases sits in a Bible where the living creatures never cease day and night, where one psalm repeats a refrain twenty-six times, and where our Lord in Gethsemane prays a third time using the same words.

And the commandment against images sits five chapters before God commands two golden cherubim and a bronze serpent, and Scripture goes on to describe Solomon's temple filled with carved figures. What is forbidden is making a god. Scripture even shows the line being crossed: Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent, the very thing God had commanded, once people started burning incense to it.

Voices of the Church

Voice of the Church

St. Basil the Great

Cited in the Catechism at CCC 2132

The honour rendered to an image passes to the one whom the image represents. The Catechism draws the conclusion: whoever venerates an image venerates the person portrayed in it.

Voice of the Church

St. John Damascene

On the Divine Images (summary)

The Incarnation changes what may be depicted. The invisible God could not be imaged; God who has taken flesh can be. The argument about statues is finally an argument about whether matter can carry grace.

Voice of the Church

The Second Council of Nicaea

787

The seventh ecumenical council distinguished the veneration given to images from the adoration due to God alone, answering the iconoclast crisis of the eighth century. The same objection was pressed again in the Reformation era, roughly seven centuries later, and the council's distinction had already been drawn.

Ready Response

The four lines you drilled, and the second passage you found beside each one. These are your notes, not a script.

“Call no man father.” You went looking and found Paul calling himself their father in 1 Corinthians 4:15, Stephen saying brethren and fathers in Acts 7:2, and Abraham the father of us all in Romans 4:16-17. The line comes from Matthew 23:8-10, which in the same breath forbids the titles rabbi and master and reserves teacher to our Lord alone; yet Paul calls himself a teacher in 1 Timothy 2:7. Say the true part first, though, because it is true: our Lord is going after men who love titles and the best seats, and that lands on clergy in every century, ours included.

“Vain repetition.” Revelation 4:8, where the living creatures never cease day and night. Psalm 136, twenty-six verses with one refrain. Matthew 26:44, where our Lord prays a third time using the same words. Emptiness is what the verse is aimed at, not repetition. And you can admit as cheerfully to your friend as you did in the room that a rosary prayed while you are thinking about lunch is exactly what the warning is about.

“Graven images.” **This is the one you found for yourself. You held Exodus 20:4-5 in mind and then read** Exodus 25:18-20, Numbers 21:8-9 and 1 Kings 6:23-29, and the commandment cannot mean what the objection needs it to mean. Then 2 Kings 18:4, where Hezekiah destroys the bronze serpent, the very object God had commanded, because people had started burning incense to it. Say that one out loud. It grants that the danger is real, and Scripture is the one granting it.

“Why confess to a priest?” John 20:23 gives the apostles authority to forgive sins and to retain them. The verse does not spell out how that authority is exercised, so do not claim it does. Point instead at what it grants: a choice between forgiving and retaining, which is a judgment, and nobody renders a judgment on a case he has not heard. That is the reasoning behind confessing our sins aloud rather than only privately, and James 5:16 tells us to confess our sins to one another. If he presses further than that, this is a good place to say you will go and find out properly.

The Most Important Line on This Sheet

“I do not know. Let me find out and come back to you.” Then actually come back. Nothing else you could have said would have been more persuasive.

Live It This Week

- Pick the one objection you fumbled and learn its second passage properly.
- Practise saying I do not know out loud until it stops feeling like a loss.
- Read Exodus 25 and 2 Kings 18:4 together.

Memory Verse

“Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence.” **1 Peter 3:15**