

# IDENTITY CRISIS

## LESSON 3: RED LETTER BUSINESS

### CORPORATE SITUATION ROOM

John is five years from retirement and a manager of a production team at the company. He is well-known as an expert in his field and respected by his team. Jimmy is a 40-year-old Christian on John's team and is quickly gaining a leadership role with the team. There is tension growing in more recent years between John and Jimmy and now the whole team. John has distanced himself from Jimmy and John withholds important communication to the team for himself and leaves Jimmy out of some of the corporate decisions. The team continues to love to work for Jimmy, but John continues to hold Jimmy hostage. Jimmy reached out to John but was stonewalled. Jimmy contemplates leaving the company.

- Q.** Why do you suspect John is unreasonable to Jimmy?
- Q.** What are indications that your work has become your identity?
- Q.** How do you deal with a person whose identity is with their work?

### MATTHEW 5:17-20

*<sup>17</sup> "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

The Law of God for his people was given through Moses in Exodus 20 as the 10 commandments but throughout Exodus, Leviticus, and as summarized again in Deuteronomy, there are a multitude of festivals, sacrifices, and special instructions for cleanliness. As you read these books you have a sense of how overwhelming all these requirements must have been for practical living in that day under those nomadic circumstances!

The law and the other many requirements were given by God to his people to clearly give his expectations of righteous living in this fallen world. The purpose and picture of this law being lived out by sinful people didn't turn out very well and the consequences were severe for them and us. We need a savior in Jesus.

In this passage Jesus claims to fulfill the law. He became our righteousness for us. God views us as righteous through the blood that Jesus shed. But this does not mean that the requirements God gave his people are invalid. These are the things that please God. They are of His Kingdom.

If you really zoom out on all the law, festivals, sacrifices, and special instructions, you will see a common theme that Jesus expresses in Matthew 22:37-40: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”* Every single instruction and command that God gives his people is to help them worship Him and trust Him alone. Jesus cannot dismiss any of these commands as they please His Father. Jesus provides a way that we can be restored to our Father as we do not have it in our sinful nature to please Him otherwise.

Gods people, the Israelites, had a propensity for serving other Gods. This seems to be a theme of the Old Testament. God gave very clear instruction as to His requirements, but they would chase after the Gods of other nations around them or that they had left. This activity infuriates our God. We know this by how God punishes His people for following other gods. We also see in the first two of the ten commandments how God is Jealous and wants us for Himself alone!

We serve and follow other gods and idols as well! It is usually subtle, but we are wooed by the allure of this world and its trappings. This can easily start at work. Work itself can become an idol. We can have idols of control, power, what people think of us, security, family and the list goes on. An idol is anything that we place our trust and faith in that turns our attention away from God.

- Q.** What motivates people to serve other Gods?
- Q.** What does an idol practically look like at work?
- Q.** How do you assess if you have any idols?
- Q.** How does having the characteristics of the beatitudes guard us against idols?