

Question:

In Exodus 20:4, it says:

“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.”

Does this mean that putting up a picture of Jesus at home is a sin?

Answer:

To get the full picture, we must read the verse in its full context. Let's look at Exodus 20:4-5:

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything... You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God...” (*Exodus 20:4-5*)

The commandment is not a blanket ban on images or artwork. Rather, it prohibits creating or using images in acts of worship, as idols.

In the Old Testament, God strongly opposed idolatry—the worship of created things instead of the Creator (Romans 1:22–23). The second commandment warns us not to make images for the purpose of worship, which was a common practice among pagan nations.

“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man...”
(*Romans 1:22–23*)

So, the sin is not in having an image, but in bowing to it, serving it, or attributing spiritual power to it. God alone is to be worshipped (Matthew 4:10).

If a picture of Jesus is used merely as decoration, or as a reminder of His life or teachings, and you do not worship it, there is no biblical command against that.

However, using such an image as a focus of prayer, or believing it holds spiritual power or presence, crosses into idolatry, which Scripture condemns.

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”
(1 John 5:21)

“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.”
(1 Corinthians 10:14-15)

Practical Application:

If you have a picture of Jesus in your home:

- If it's there for beauty, history, or inspiration—it's not a sin.
- If it's used in worship, prayer, or reverence—then it's a form of idolatry, even if unintentional.

Some Christian traditions (e.g., Catholicism) use images or statues of Jesus, Mary, or saints in devotional practices. Biblically, this violates the Second Commandment. God is described as a jealous God, meaning He will not share His worship with any image (Isaiah 42:8):

“I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.” (*Isaiah 42:8*)

If you're involved in such practices, it would be wise to prayerfully reconsider and remove anything that might dishonor God or distract your worship from Him.

There's nothing wrong with hanging a picture of Jesus—as long as it's not worshiped. What matters most is your heart and the intention behind it. Worship belongs to God alone, and it must be done in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (*John 4:24*)

Let everything in your home point to the greatness of God—not replace Him. Use images wisely, never as a substitute for faith, and always keep your devotion centered on Christ alone.

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