

What are My Idols?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Based on the question: "What are some modern forms of idolatry?"
 - 1. "Idols? You must be kidding. That's what they have in undeveloped countries, right?"
 - 2. "Me? An idol-worshiper? What do you take me for? A pagan?"
- B. All the various forms of modern idolatry have one thing at their core: self.
 - 1. We no longer bow down to idols and images. Instead we worship at the altar of the god of self.
- C. First, we worship at the altar of materialism which feeds our need and greed through the acquisition of more "stuff."
 - 1. Our homes are filled with possessions. We build bigger and bigger houses with more closets and storage space in order to house all the things we buy, much of which isn't paid for yet.
 - 2. Most of our stuff has "planned obsolescence" built into it, making it useless in no time, and so we consign it to storage space.
 - 3. Then we rush out to buy the newest item, and the process starts over.
 - 4. This insatiable desire for more, better, and newer stuff is nothing more than old-fashioned covetousness.
 - a. In every dispensation, God has addressed this with His people
 - b. Ex. 20:17; Heb. 13:5; 1Tim. 6:6-8
- D. Second, we worship at the altar of our own pride and ego. This often takes the form of obsession with careers and jobs.
 - 1. Some spend 60-80 hours a week working. Even on the weekends and during vacations, our laptops are humming and our minds are whirling with thoughts of how to be more successful.
 - 2. In the meantime, the Lord's work goes undone, our Savior goes without worship, our mates go without a true life partner, and our children are starving for attention and love.
 - 3. We deceive ourselves into thinking we are doing it for them, to give them a better life. But a better life comes by means of the time you spend with them, not the things you give to them.
 - 4. Whether work or education, whether hobby or recreation, all of our accomplishments will be of no use to us after we die
 - a. Ecc. 2:21-23; Matt. 6:33
- E. Third, we idolize mankind through science. This gives us the illusion that we are lords of our world.
 - 1. We snicker at God's Word and His creation, and we accept the nonsense of evolution. Our children are taught to embrace Gaia the goddess of environmentalism, and we fool ourselves into thinking we can preserve the earth indefinitely when God has declared the earth has a limited lifespan.
 - 2. Technology has become our savior because it makes life easier in this world, distracting us from our need to prepare for the world to come
 - a. 2Peter 3:10-13

F. Fourth, we worship a 21st century Bacchus, the god of entertainment. We have come to believe that we exist to be entertained

1. Work is done so we can afford to be entertained; families and friends are nothing more than the people with whom we share entertainment; church services must be entertaining; food is a means of increasing our enjoyment of entertainment; we think about entertainment, memorize lists of our favorite entertainers, collect entertainment in all of its forms, talk endlessly about our entertainment, build relationships solely based on specific forms of entertainment

2. I am incapable of listing all of the categories of entertainment in a single sermon, but what I do know is that in all likelihood you think of some form of entertainment frequently during the sermon

3. Sports figures are our new demi-gods, the commenters the priests, the stadiums the temples, the games are the worship services, and the endless discussion in all of the media the Bible studies. The average person has 28 means of accessing sports available to him

4. And that is just sports; what about television, Internet, social networking, movies, literature, shopping, dining, gaming, hobbies, exercise, community events, and on and on?

5. Members of the Lord's church have come to the point where they honestly believe that it is acceptable to God to allow their children to skip Bible study and worship services for sports activities and to go to school dances

6. They have ceased worshiping the God of heaven and exchanged Him for the god of this world - 1Cor. 10:6-7

G. Fifth, and perhaps the most destructive of idols, we worship at the altar of the fulfillment of the self to the exclusion of all others and their needs.

1. Brian Regan - People waiting for selfish passengers on a plane to get everything situated the way they want it before letting anyone else get by them to board. "Oh, this is your world! It's all about you. You let us know when you're all set, Captain You-Planet."

2. Affluent countries have unlimited access to alcohol and drugs (prescription drug abuse is at an all-time high). People drink, abuse drugs, smoke, behave self-destructively, choose harmful behaviors and lifestyles and expect others to carry them and pay for it

3. Illustration: People drive like they are the only one on the road with some place to go with no regard for the danger in which they are placing others. "Me first!"

4. As if they are playing a video game, they do not consider that there are real people in the other cars who have important lives and loves

5. Pandemic self-centeredness has replaced moral responsibility, and this state of affairs is the firstborn child of evolution, i.e. you are nothing more than an animal living a short span, so do what you want by any means necessary

6. Satan lied to us; knowing more and having more didn't make us gods (Gen. 3:5). It made us selfish children

I. HOW CAN A CHRISTIAN BE AN IDOLATER?

- A. All idolatry has at its core the three lusts of 1John 2:15-17
 - 1. All idolatry makes one a fool - Rom. 1:21-26ff
- B. Idolatry (Greek, eidololatreia) "image worship" (Strongs)
 - 1. In the beginning stages of idolatry, no one worships the image itself
 - 2. The idol simply served two purposes: 1) to localize the god it represents, and 2) to visualize the god it represents
 - 3. Inevitably, however, people end up worshipping the image, even occasionally forgetting the god it represents
- C. Contemporary idolatry is anything that displaces God
 - 1. In our time, idolatry is not just the worship of images; any strong desire for material things that replaces our desire for God is a form of idolatry
 - 2. Any person, activity, cause, or object to which we devote more of our time and resources than we do to God is an idol - Matt 6:21, 24
 - 3. Therefore, we can be idolaters when we make things other than God Himself our highest priority in life
 - 4. Good things and spiritually neutral objects can be made into idols: our mates, occupations, families, home, leisure
- D. How will I know if I have become an idolater?
 - 1. What is your purpose in life? - Ecc. 12:13
 - 2. How much of your life do you devote to that purpose?
 - a. Matt. 13:44-46; Rom. 12:1; 2Cor. 8:5
 - 3. What do you think about?
 - a. When you are in worship, do you think about doing other things?
 - b. When you are doing other things, do you think about worship?
 - 4. Not until we love God with all of our being and love others as ourselves will there be no room in our hearts for idolatry - Matt. 22:36-40