

Identifying Idols In Our Lives



Part 5: Individualism and Choice



What Do You Worship?

Where We've Been

Week 1:

Defining Idols

Week 2:

The Idol of Money

Week 3:

The Idol of Romantic Love

Week 4:

The Idol of Success

TONIGHT:

The Idols of Individualism, Choice

Identifying Idols



What Do You Worship?

Idolatry Defined

We all struggle with idols that distract us from whole-hearted, single-minded devotion to God.

“[An idol] is anything:

- more important to you than God,
- anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God,
- anything you seek to give you what only God can give you.”

Identifying Idols



What Do You Worship?

Idolatry Defined

***Can Individualism
Instant Gratification and
Choice Be Considered
Idols?***

Identifying Idols



Societal Idols: The Idol of Individualism

- ▶ Americans are taught to worship the archetype of the individual standing on his/her own, all alone against _____.
- ▶ Christianity cannot be understood, or fully experienced, outside of a communal relationship – the local church.
- ▶ Individualism warps our beliefs and practices and can lead us to worshipping a different god.

Identifying Idols



Societal Idols: The Idol of Individualism

- ▶ Individualism warps our beliefs and practices and can lead us to worshipping a different god.
 - Individualism leads us to believe we don't need to be part of a local church, and that our faith is just as valid without the only community Christ initiated (connection through His body).
 - Individualism leads us to believe that we alone (or our church alone) can save the world, and that whatever we are doing is the most important thing for us to be doing.
 - Individualism leads us to want to hear special revelation from God for every part of our life, to the exclusion of reading the scriptures and deliberating together.

Identifying Idols



Societal Idols: The Idol of Individualism

- ▶ Individualism warps our beliefs and practices and can lead us to worshipping a different god.
 - Individualism leads us to believe that our possessions belong to us, and allow us to withhold from others in need.

Identifying Idols



Societal Idols: The Idol of Individualism

- ▶ Individualism warps our beliefs and practices and can lead us to worshipping a different god.

All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Acts 2:44-46; 4:33b-35

Identifying Idols



Societal Idols: The Idol of Individualism

- ▶ Individualism warps our beliefs and practices and can lead us to worshipping a different god.
 - When the believers held everything in common – everyone's needs were met and there were no need people.
 - When believers today withhold what is “theirs” – needs abound and needy people remain everywhere.

Identifying Idols



Societal Idols: *The Idol of Instant Gratification*

- ▶ Instant gratification warps our time horizon, and leaves us impatient with God and others.
- ▶ How long should we wait on the Lord when praying for something in particular?
- ▶ How long should we walk with a friend who has difficulty overcoming a certain issue in their life?
- ▶ How many times should we forgive someone who has not been as proactive as we think they should be in changing their behavior?

Identifying Idols



Societal Idols:

The Idol of Instant Gratification

- ▶ Example: Abraham and Sarah, who did not trust that God's promises would be fulfilled in time, and sought to fulfill the promise of a child (Ishmael) through Hagar. (Genesis 16)
- ▶ Example: Saul, who could not wait on the battlefield for Samuel to offer the sacrifice because he was late and the soldiers were abandoning him. (1 Samuel 13)
- ▶ Contrast: Simeon, who waited his entire life just to be able to see the birth of the Messiah. (Luke 2)

Identifying Idols



Societal Idols: *The Idol of Instant Gratification*

- ▶ Do I buy things on credit simply because I want them now?
- ▶ Do I get discouraged and give up if I don't see quick results in dieting, studying, saving, etc.?
- ▶ Am I prone to take shortcuts in my job, relationships, and spiritual life?
- ▶ Do I tend to stop praying for something or someone when God doesn't answer quickly?

Identifying Idols



Societal Idols: *The Idol of Instant Gratification*

- ▶ Do I have trouble waiting for mealtimes to eat?
- ▶ Do I make decisions quickly because I don't want to wait?
- ▶ Do I get angry when I have to wait in line?
- ▶ Do I have time delaying gratification (or even fasting from something for a period of time)?
- ▶ Do I persevere in my relationship with God, allowing time for true transformation from within, or do I expect that external changes will be quickly apparent?

Identifying Idols



Societal Idols: The Idol of Choice

- ▶ Can too many choices be a bad thing?
- ▶ Do the endless choices in denominations and worship styles leave me wondering if there is a better choice out there?
- ▶ Do I find that I am not pursuing the priorities of the Lord because I need to figure out the best choice for proceeding?
- ▶ Do I believe that I have a choice about whether or not to obey the Lord, or about whether or not I actually believe in God?

Identifying Idols



The Folly of Idols

Isaiah 44

*“This is what the Lord says—
Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty:
I am the first and I am the last;
Apart from me there is no God.
Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it.
Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since
I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—
Yes, let them foretell what will come.*

*All who make idols are nothing,
And the things they treasure are worthless.
Those who would speak up for them are blind;
They are ignorant, to their own shame.
Who shapes a god and casts an idol,
Which can profit nothing?*

Identifying Idols



The Folly of Idols

Isaiah 44

*The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals;
He shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm.
He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint.*

*The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker;
He roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses.
He shapes it in human form, human form in all its glory,
That it may dwell in a shrine.
He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak.
He let it grow among the trees of the forest,
Or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow.*

Identifying Idols



The Folly of Idols

Isaiah 44

*It is used as fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself,
He kindles a fire and bakes bread.*

*But he also fashions a god and worships it;
He makes an idol and bows down to it.*

Half of the wood he burns in the fire;

Over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill.

He also warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm; I see the fire. "

From the rest he makes a god, his idol;

He bows down to it and worships.

He prays to it and says, "Save me! You are my god!"

They know nothing, they understand nothing;

Their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see,

And their minds closed so they cannot understand.

Identifying Idols



The Folly of Idols

Isaiah 44

*No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say,
“Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals,
I roasted meat and I ate.*

Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left?

Shall I bow down to a block of wood?”

Such a person feeds on ashes; a deluded heart misleads him;

He cannot save himself, or say, “Is not this thing in my right hand a lie? ”

“Remember these things, Jacob,

For you, Israel, are my servant.

I have made you, you are my servant;

Israel, I will not forget you.

I have swept away your offenses like a cloud,

Your sins like the morning mist.

Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”

Identifying Idols