

THE IDOL OF MONEY

DATE: SUNDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER 2019 | SERIES: IDOLS - PART: 1

EXODUS 20:4-5

'You shall have no other gods before me. 'You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them. Exodus 20:4,5.

NOTE TO LEADERS:

This is the first week of our new format Talk It Over! The aim of this week's group discussion is to help people understand what idols are and to begin identifying idols in their own lives. In the next four weeks, we will cover four focus idols: Money, Power, Sex & Busyness. Pick and choose questions that will work best for your group.

START TALKING

1. Share with the group what you considered to be your "most valuable possession" when you were 10 - 12 years old. What was so great about having that thing?
2. What truth from Sunday's message had the greatest impact on you? Why?

START THINKING

1. An idol is anything in our lives that is more fundamental to our happiness, meaning in life or our identity than God is. An idol is anything we love more than God or rest our heart in more than God. What do these statements teach us about modern-day idols?
2. Why do you think God speaks so strongly in His word against idols?

START SHARING

1. In what ways have you struggled with letting a good thing become an ultimate thing in your life?
2. Below are four warning signs of money becoming an idol in our lives:
 1. Unable to be happy for others
 2. Live in a state of comparison
 3. It's constantly on our mind
 4. You have a destination mindset – as soon as I have achieved "X" I will be content.

Have any of these ever applied to you?
How can we avoid money/possessions from becoming an idol in our lives?

3. "Nobody changes a bad habit by just trying, or by saying I'm going to try harder to change. The heart is so constituted that the only way to dispose of an old affection is to displace it by the power of a new one." (Thomas Chalmers) What stands out to you most from this quote with regards to ensuring Christ is supreme in our hearts?

START PRAYING

Pray that the Holy Spirit would help you identify any idols or possible idols in your lives and that they would be displaced by an overwhelming affection for Jesus Christ!

START DOING

According to 1 Timothy 6:18, one of the ways that we stop money from controlling us is to be generous towards others. Look for an opportunity this week to be generous toward someone else.

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, we began a new series titled "Idols". In this series, we will look at four of the greatest idols of our time: Money, Power, Sex and Busyness. In his message, Steve covered the following questions:

- "What are idols?"
- "How can we identify our idols?"
- "How do we deal with idols?"

And we explored the idol of money in more depth.

1. WHAT ARE IDOLS?

Idolatry is a problem for humankind everywhere. Throughout the Old Testament, we read of prophets warning God's people not to bow down before idols. In Exodus 20:3-5, the first and second commandments warn against idolatry: 'You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.

But idols were not just an "Old Testament" problem. Tim Keller defines modern-day idols by asking the following question: What things, if you lost it, could mean that almost all significance and value could be drained from your life? The Bible calls those 'things' idols.

- An idol is anything in our lives that is more fundamental to our happiness, meaning in life or our identity than God is. i.e. More fundamental than God to your sense of significance or self-worth.
- An idol is anything we love more than God, or rest our heart in more than God. An idol can be our careers, family, children, spouse, achievement, some cause, our own physical attractiveness, romance, human approval, power, comfort, financial security... almost anything. It's important to note that these are all good things. Idols are usually not bad things, but good things that we look to, to give us what only God can give us. They are created things that we look to, to give us only what the Creator can give us. We think of sin as violations of the law, i.e. behaviour - and of that is true, e.g. murder, robbery, lying are sin. But, if you want to go deeper, Augustine defines sin as follows: "The essence of sin is disordered love." For example, if we look at career and family, both are important, but if you love your career ahead of your family, both your family and career will suffer.
- When we turn something good into something ultimate, it becomes an idol. For example, in the area of romance, marrying the right person is important. However, secular culture has so idolized the idea that someone else can fulfil you and complete you and be your redemption, that when things don't work out that way, our worlds fall apart. Whatever is in the "ultimate" place in our lives is what we look to for 'salvation' or rescue. If something other than God is in that place, i.e. an idol, they cannot help us when they are gone! We are all in danger of putting the wrong thing in the ultimate place.
- An idol will always break our hearts. 'Because no created things can bear the freights of your deepest hopes or the weight of your soul's longings.' (Tim Keller) It's because God cares so deeply for us that He tells us not to have idols. If we do not relinquish our idols, God will eventually give us over to them! Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Romans 1:26. David Foster Wallace, an American writer and Pulitzer prize nominee, (who was also the son of an atheist and no one really knew where he stood personally with faith) was a troubled but brilliant man who was invited to give a commencement address at a university: "In the day to day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing a spiritual god... is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and possessions - if they are where you place real meaning in life - then you will never have enough. If you worship your body and beauty and sexual allure, then you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will

die a million deaths before they finally grieve you. If you worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more and more power over others just to numb you to your own fear. If you worship your intellect, if that is what you live for - for being seen as smart - you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud always on the verge of being found out. But the thing about all these forms of worship is that they are unconscious - they are default settings - we don't even know we have them.

2. HOW THEN CAN WE IDENTIFY OUR IDOLS?

We can't just ask ourselves since our hearts lie to us all the time! But Tim Keller suggests two ways:

1. Look at your nightmares - what you fear most
2. Look at your strongest emotions - when the idols we serve are under threat

They ... worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is for ever praised. Amen. Romans 1:25. What is your Idol? This week we focused specifically on the Idol of Money.

3. THE IDOL OF MONEY (AND POSSESSIONS)

Money and possessions have such a strong pull to idolatry that Jesus mentions it specifically in Matthew 6:24; 'You cannot serve both God and Money.' How do you know if money is becoming an idol for you? Michael Kelly and others list some warning signs:

1. Unable to be happy for others
2. Live in a state of comparison
3. It's constantly on our mind
4. You have a destination mindset - as soon as I have achieved "X" I will be content

Let's look at one passage from the New Testament in particular: ... not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. 1 Timothy 6:17-19. From this passage, we learn:

1. Money and life is transient - we can't put our hope in wealth (see it as our saviour)
2. God is the Source and Provider of our money/possessions/wealth
3. We should honour God with money - be generous (it's His money in our hands)
4. We need to learn to view money in light of eternity

4. HOW DO WE DEAL WITH IDOLS?

Or, to use Augustine's language, how do we re-order our loves? First, we need to repent. Repentance means changing our behaviour and displacing the idols with our relationship with Christ. This is easier said than done since our natural human default is to our idols! "Nobody changes a bad habit by just trying, or by saying I'm going to try harder to change. The heart is so constituted that the only way to dispose of an old affection is to displace it by the power of a new one." (Thomas Chalmers: The Expulsive Power of New Affections.)

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Colossians 3:4.

We need to let the wonder and splendid Majesty of the Gospel fill our gaze. The Supremacy of Christ, His sacrifice, His love and grace and forgiveness and mercy should so fill our gaze that our eyes are opened to the danger and pettiness of our idols. We ought to let Him be enthroned in our hearts and minds and souls and emotions.

When we let Him be King then everything else - all the other things - will find their rightful place.