

Church of God Sunday School



"Thou

shalt have no other gods
before me."

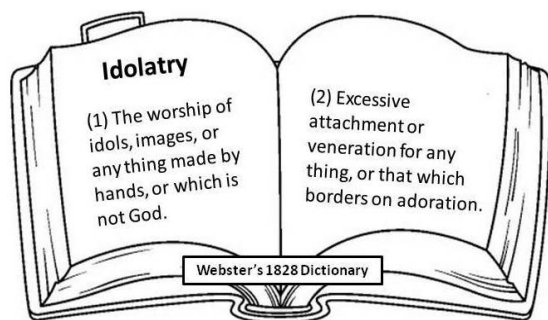
Exodus 20:3

THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP #10 – IDOLATRY

DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** The Bible warns against idolatry (Exodus 20:3; 1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 John 5:21).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** Idolatry is trading truth for a lie (Isaiah 44:17-20; Jeremiah 13:25; Romans 1:25).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** Rachel and Michal had household idols (Genesis 31:19, 34-35; 1 Samuel 19:13).
- ❑ **Thursday:** How serious is the sin of idolatry (1 Samuel 15:23; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-6)?
- ❑ **Friday:** You will become like what you are worshiping (Psalm 115:1-8; 2 Kings 17:15; Colossians 3:10).
- ❑ **Saturday:** Do you have a divided heart (1 Kings 18:21; Hosea 10:2; Hosea 7:8; Luke 16:13)?

MEMORY VERSE: *"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."*
—2 Corinthians 6:16



What Is Idolatry?

What do you think of when you read the words *idols* or *idolatry*? While the Bible is full of stories about idols, is this something that a Christian might be tempted with today? Do you personally know anyone who bows down and worships idols? Dwight L. Moody said: "You don't have to go to heathen lands today to find false gods. America is full of them. Whatever you love more than God is your idol." Today's idols are more deceptive and more difficult

to recognize than the false gods of wood and stone described in the Bible. John warned in 1 John 5:21, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." This is another deceptive tool that the devil has in his workshop.

To understand how idolatry is so dangerous, it is necessary to understand why people want to worship. God created us with a desire to worship (Revelation 4:11), to give glory (praise and worship) to God. It has been said that "worshiping is a part of your spiritual DNA." Worship is more than something that happens in a church service. It is a part of your everyday life. Worship includes deep admiration, love, and devotion for someone or something. Whether someone is a Christian or not, saved or unsaved, he or she is worshiping something. The question is not, *do you worship* but *what* are you worshiping? If you are worshiping anything other than God, that is idolatry.

Idol Worship in the Bible

In Romans 1:25 Paul described how idolatry begins: people trade truth for a lie and worship the creation "more than the Creator." When people rejected God, you can read that they worshiped idols representing the sun, the moon, trees, animals, and even people. God continually warned His people to not be a part of idolatry. The first of the Ten Commandments says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). Yet, time after time God's people disobeyed. You can read of household idols in the stories of Rachel (Genesis 31:19, 34-35) and Michal (1 Samuel 19:13). You can read of idols shaped like a calf (Exodus 32:4). Jeremiah and Paul challenged people who did not even know what they were worshiping (Jeremiah 44:3; Acts 17:23). Idol worship often involved many gods (polytheistic) and included prayer, burning



incense, dancing, immorality, prostitution, and sacrifices (sometimes human). People worshiped idols to have better crops, better health, more children, and victory in battle. The Israelites often fell into idol worship, wanting to be like the neighboring tribes. Notice how all these desires begin with self. True worship is doing what makes God happy, but false worship centers around you (what makes you happy). No doubt, this may very well be why the Apostle Paul compared idolatry with covetousness (greedy or wrong desires for what belongs to another). Not only does idolatry steal worship that belongs to God, but it also encourages a selfish, sinful way of living. Is it any wonder that Galatians 5:19-21 lists it with terrible sins, such as witchcraft and murder?

What Are You Worshiping?

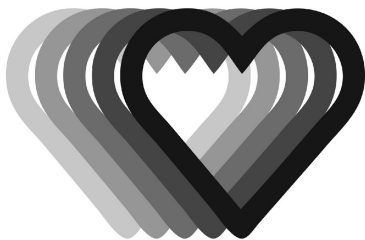
Today's culture has replaced the idols of the Old Testament (such as, Baal, Ashtoreth, and Molech) with new idols to be worshiped. The word *idol* no longer has a negative meaning in the minds of many of today's youth. The word *idol* is found in television shows (*American Idol*, *Pop Idol*, and *Canadian Idol*), song titles (*I Idolize You*), and book titles. A *teen idol* is defined as "a celebrity with a large teenage fan-base" (*Wikipedia*). Urban dictionaries have included the term *my idol*, defining it as "someone you admire so much it is unexplainable." Could it be that such common usage of this word is blinding us to the dangers of true idolatry?



Today's Idols

What are some of the idols being worshiped today? Let us name just a few. There is the god of approval, the god of entertainment, the god of technology, the god of good appearances, the god of possessions, the god of self, the god of money, the god of success, the god of fashion, and the god of knowledge. Often things that are necessary can become idols. For instance, a computer, tablet, or smartphone might be required for school or work. However, when too much time is wasted on it, when it causes you to neglect Bible reading and prayer, it has pushed God out of first place in your heart.

What are some symptoms of idol worship? How can you know if something or someone is replacing God in your life? Do you think about it and talk about it often? Is it the first thing you think of in the morning? Do you spend too much time and money on it? Is it influencing your core beliefs, your decisions, and your thinking? Whether your idol is a person, thing, or idea, in time you will become more and more like that which you are worshiping. Psalm 115:8 says, "They that make them [idols] are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them."



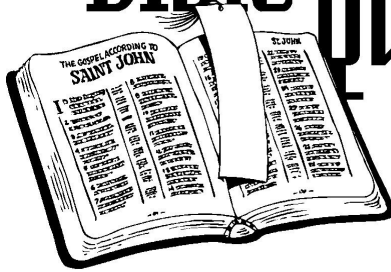
Do You have a divided heart?

Do You Have a Divided Heart?

King Solomon was greatly blessed by God. First Kings 3:3 says, "And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father." However, 1 Kings 11:4 tells us that "when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods." Solomon tried to love the Lord and please his wives; he had a divided heart. Israel, too, often had a divided heart (Hosea 10:2), trying to serve God and Baal. Hosea described them as a "cake not turned" (Hosea 7:8), burnt on one side and doughy on the other. Elijah asked Israel, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Jesus said in Luke 16:13, "No servant can serve two masters." If you say you are a Christian, yet other things or people have taken first place in your heart (Ezekiel 14:3), you have a divided heart. God will not share His praise and worship with idols (Isaiah 42:8).

In Ezekiel 36:24-27 God promised the idolatrous Israelites that He would wash them clean and put a new heart and a new spirit within. When you repent of your sins (and idolatry is a sin), God will become first in your heart and life. In the song, *O, For a Closer Walk With Thee*, William Cowper wrote, "The dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol be, help me to tear it from Thy throne and worship only Thee." Is there an idol in your heart, something that has replaced God in your love and time? If so, pray and ask God to forgive you and to help you recognize the dangers of idol worship. Make prayer and Bible reading a high priority in your daily life. Putting God first in everything you do (Proverbs 3:6) is the best way to prevent idolatry!

Bible Quiz



1. What is idolatry? _____

2. What does worship include? _____

3. How did Paul say that idolatry begins? _____

4. What were some of the things that idols in the Bible represented? _____

5. Look up Matthew 10:37. How could this become an idol? _____

6. True worship is making _____ happy, but false worship centers around _____.
7. Why did Paul compare idolatry to covetousness? _____

8. How can something necessary become an idol? _____

9. What are some idols that might be tempting to you? _____

10. What is the warning found in Psalm 115:8? _____

11. What does it mean to have a divided heart? _____

12. How can you prevent idolatry in your own life? _____

Identifying Idols

Fill in the missing words



"And Rachel had stolen the _____ that were her father's" (Genesis 31:19).



"They have made them a _____ calf, and have worshipped it" (Exodus 32:8).

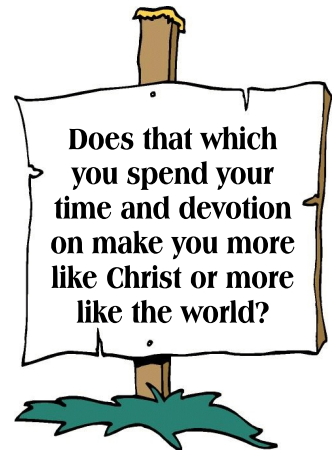


"_____ was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD" (1 Samuel 5:4).

Something to Think About

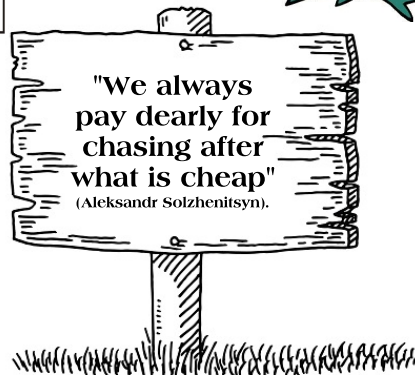


"Everyone should be respected as an individual, but no one should be idolized"
(Albert Einstein).



Does that which you spend your time and devotion on make you more like Christ or more like the world?

"Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God"
(Martin Luther).



"We always pay dearly for chasing after what is cheap"
(Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn).