



## **Idols; Got One, Some or None?**

***My beloved, flee from idolatry.*** —1 Corinthians 10:14

You were designed to worship the Lord alone—no one else.

Sideways-worship used to be pretty easy to recognize back in the day. In fact paying homage to idols like Molech, Ashteroth, and the Baals used to be vogue too. If you were living out on that windswept sandy terrain of Israel's wilderness during Old Testament times, you would be able to detect the worship of idols in a heartbeat—you know, all that spinning, hopping and dancing around like crazy people used to do before solid statutes of fury creatures and stuff. At least that's how it played-out in front the golden bovine and a ticked off Charlton Heston in that Cecil B. De Mille's flick about Moses and God's Top Ten List.

Perhaps you've seen some Nat Geo shows. If so, you've probably noticed some people bowing down on their faces a bunch of times before the different animal and celestial images they've made. That's wrong, but someone's got to go show them a better way. You know how people have done this sort of thing for centuries in remote places to get their supposed gods to deliver them rain and a harvest so that they wouldn't starve to death. These precious people are concerned about evil spirits that they fear will potentially hurting their families, crops or bodies... so they pay them homage, maybe with some fruit and sincere reverence.. just to pacify them and hold them at bay.

Is so sad, and this kind of activity stinks to high heaven. When Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, the worship of dumb idols was totally rampant and perverse in society (like it is today, only it's performed a little different). It was done out in the open too. Paul basically told them to ditch those man-made religious statues, but he didn't want to leave them with nothing left to worship. He pointed them to Christ, because when you think about it; everyone will worship something or someone, and the Lord is the only One worthy of our worship.

God is the only One who can satisfy all the deep needs of the human heart and He is the One who can make us truly alive inside. He probably won't make you rich financially, but He does promise to meet all the needs of His children.

Now, misdirected veneration towards Mary or saints—misguided adoration of anything other than the Lord is just sin that hurts God's heart. Real Christians choose to avoid this at all costs, because they don't want to hinder the Church's fishin' commission or other ministry efforts. That's why we'd all be very wise to take heed and permanently bolt from all that might even appear to be idol worship.

*My dear friends, flee from the worship of idols.* —Paul, 1 Corinthians 10:14

*Are we using our material blessings to serve the Lord— or have we become slaves to them?* —  
Haddon W. Robinson

*You shall have no other gods before Me.* —Exodus 20:3

There are not very many people in the civilized Western World today that believe that idolatry is going on amongst us. American Idol (the TV show) is happening here ...and I admit to having enjoyed this program a few times. Some of those people are so radically talented it just blows me away and I have actually cheered for some when they win, but the ones I like to watch most as they perform are the people with no singing talent at all. I can relate to them a lot because I don't have much talent.

I do think it gets weird sometimes when some of those in the audience do want to make a few of these performers into their real idols to swoon after (maybe for monetary purposes). Who knows... maybe some of the singers even want their spectators to worship them so they can become famous? Dunno; but sinners sin because they are sinners! They're not sinners because they sin—they already have a sin nature inside of them. So why should we try to moralize some of them; the ones who want to give or receive misdirected veneration. That's not our duty. Let's just love people and preach the Gospel in a non-preachy way instead!

We must be aware though of a subtle form of idolatry that has millions deceived today. It's the sin of customizing or creating from scratch a god to suit ourselves and that we can literally worship. Where does this happen you ask? It happens in a person's imagination first—deep in their minds and hearts, as they design their own image of the god they desire to offer adulation to.

Why is this so trendy and hot with the world in every generation? The reason it's so popular is that "our newly fashioned god" that's really no god at all (duh!)... has no moral dictates for anyone. Today's worshippers of dumb idols love to have it that way too. Why be accountable when you can choose not to be? People want to be Lord of their own lives and do what feels good. They want to do what they want to do, because they've been told that they deserve to such and such.

You see their modish new deity is uber-nice, in-style and would never cruelly create a place called Hell. Oh no! Why allow there to be consequences for the wrong choices of people who deserve the best? Modern idols would never come up with any commandments or some Great White Throne Judgment ahead for their devotees (like all non-Christians will one day make an appearance at, with a holy God before them as their Judge).

Contemporary idol worshipers prefer the world's type of wisdom in decision making, the world's type of (substance-induced) peace against all potential anxiety or thoughts of personal responsibility. George Whitefield addressed this saying, "*First, then, before you can speak peace to your hearts, you must be made to see, made to feel, made to weep over, made to bewail your actual transgressions against the Law of God.*"

*The dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol be,  
Help me tear it from Thy throne and worship only Thee.* —Cowper

*“I have an old nature that noisily clamors to satisfy empty desire; but God in His goodness has sent me a Helper who whispers, ‘Your calling is higher.’” —Gustafson*

Hey, if you are a senior pastor who has placed an under qualified foolish family member in a position of authority over all the other leaders in the church and their poor judgment keeps hurting church people, then you need to get your priorities back in order. Perhaps you are a Christian business owner and have done that, because you want someone you can control, you know, to run things (even if it's in a wrong way) when you are away as you tell what to accomplish. This way you could be gone on your many vacations or you could retire and run the company by remote control so to speak? It could still be your source of security. But listen, that's only going to work against what you are trying to build and it will misrepresent the Master you want to please. It's not what you get done, but how you get it done that matters.

Please understand that an idol is anything that takes the place of God in your life. We are to seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness, not seek these things second or third or forth etc. I sure love my Christian wife and she definitely is a priority for me, but if I were to allow her to get in-between me and my relationship with the Lord I would be in the wrong. If I no longer took time to pray or to study the Bible or to go take part in Christian fellowship or in witnessing, then I would need to be rebuked. I'd need to repent!

My wife, Liney, doesn't want me first in her life, and I do want her second in mine behind my relationship Christ. As growing born again Christians, we made that agreement long before our wedding. Christ first always, as He helps us! At that time when we met, if I was stubbornly dating a lost or worldly girl who rejected Christ instead of dating Liney, then I would have been dating an idol ...that is until I got my priorities back in order and started to obey the Word.

My wife loves and submits to my leadership short of sin of her own volition (and I never want to tell her to sin), but she doesn't live for me. She lives 100 percent for Jesus. I love my wife, but I live for and love Christ more than her. She would have it be that way, because then I love her better. It just works best that way! I do my best to meet my wife's needs, and God is the One she looks to for all her needs to be met by. Without expecting her to meet all my needs, she often seeks to meet them and I am thankful for how many needs she has met in my life. We give the glory to the Lord. By her own choice, my wife Liney hasn't allowed others to take second place in her life ahead of me or allowed anyone or thing to displace the Lord Who she gladly seeks first daily. She also wants right priorities always like I do.

Idolatry is so whacked, ugly and dangerous today, but it's far from open and obvious like it used to be in Bible times. Real idols are usually more subtle and hard to detect, for they set up their home in the hidden places of our heart. Cash, cars, computers, Connie, careers—they all can take the place of God in our lives if we allow them to.

If we want to identify our idols, we simply need to consider our predominant thoughts... for what we think about most of the time may be an idol. What do you talk about the most? Look at your check registry or bank account records ..or credit card statement and see where most of your money is going to. Christian, are you obedient in giving tithes and offerings as God leads you? Hey, I'm not after your money like many people are after: but this is a very good question huh.

Where do you invest your time the most? What's most on the lips is often what is most on the heart. Jesus said, **"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart\* brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks"** (Lk. 6:45, nkjv).

What are your last thoughts about as you lay your head down on the pillow at night before you fall asleep? What's your first thought about when you wakeup in the morning? What do you daydream about at different times throughout the day? It's normally about the items, personalities and issues that we treasure and trust the most. Right? But any purchase, possession or person that we put our hope in ...to bring us fulfillment in this life, any aspiration, ambition, objective or goal that becomes numero uno... yes, more important to us than the Lord Himself ...these things (or people) are the "gods" that have distracted us away from focusing on Jesus, or caught our attention away, or attracted our allegiance and have subtly taken control our hearts and lives.

What many church people don't realize is that many things that are good or healthy in and of themselves.. can even take the place of God in our lives as well... if we let them. Do you spend too much time on the computer or at the gym? Don't be like so many Christians who put their family or sports or hobbies or children ahead of the calling of God in their lives. On the other hand, please don't go and hurt your family by trying to fulfill the call of God your own way instead of doing it God's way. To fulfill your evangelistic and ministry calling and purpose, you will want to worship the Lord alone and abandon all forms of idolatry.

Do you possibly have an idol that you need to talk with someone about and forsake? Would you like prayer for something bugging you? [Contact](mailto:Fish4Souls.org) Fish4Souls.org today and we will listen and pray for you.

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Could I name of few possible contemporary idols? Sure, here are some: **Money, religion, tradition, girlfriend or boyfriend, pleasure, career, success, drugs, alcohol, sex, cars, boats, one's boss, one's company, ones denomination, one's church, one's children, spouse, favorite band, favorite preacher, denomination, an accomplishment, image, specific material possessions, status, power, influence, one's position, self** (I mean living to please yourself instead of to please the Lord, (see 2 Cor. 5:9,14).

(Again, it's not wrong for everyone to have these things, but it becomes wrong when we begin to love these things and turn to them to satisfy or fulfill us. It's wrong when we love these things more than we love God).

***Here are some general terms that are associated with idols past and present*** (again, we are never to worship God's angels, saints, spirits or these dumb things):

- **Fetishism** is the worship of trees, rivers, sea, lakes, hills, stones, the environment (there's a big push for this today, although we should keep things clean here for those who might follow after us).
- **Nature worship** is the worship of the sun, moon, stars celestial bodies etc.
- Super-star or hero worship: The worship of deceased ancestors, or of super models, movie actors, singers, dancers, musical band heroes, or sports heroes... living or dead.
- **Minerva**: was the Roman name of a Greek goddess named Athena. She was considered to be the virgin goddess of warriors, poetry, medicine, wisdom, commerce, crafts, and the inventor of

all music. This idol has to do with science and human knowledge as if they are the keys to everything—each an end in themselves.

- **Baal** and **Ashteroth**: These Canaanite fertility gods involved male and female temple prostitution and all manner of illicit perverted sexual experiences.

- **Narcissus, Narkissos**: the god of Self-love. This was the god of self-admiration (Greek: Νάρκισσος) a hero of the territory of Thespieae in Boeotia who was renowned for his beauty.

- **Venus**; the second-closest planet to the Sun, orbiting it every 224.7 Earth days. This planet was named after Venus, the Roman goddess of love. It is the brightest natural object in the night sky, except for the Moon, reaching an apparent magnitude of  $-4.6$ . Aphrodite, Hollywood romantic love?

- **Mars**: of course this is the fourth planet from the Sun in the Solar System. The planet is named after Mars, the Roman god of war and violence.

Jupiter, Zeus: exalted ego and pride

- **The Golden Calf**, representing "mammon" which is the false god of riches and avarice worldly gain or cupidity. Money isn't evil in and of itself, but I mean riches regarded as an object of worship and greedy pursuit; wealth as an evil, more or less personified. Devotion to money and wealth

- **Bacchus**: "Eat, drink and be merry, tomorrow we die." Hedonism.

- **Stoicism**: Excessive "self-denial." The core doctrine of Stoicism concerns cosmic determinism and human freedom, and the belief that virtue is to maintain a will that is in accord with nature. It came from a school of Hellenistic philosophy, founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium in the early third century BC. It proved to be very popular and a durable philosophy, with a following throughout Greece and the Roman Empire from the time of its founding until all the schools of philosophy were ordered closed in 529 AD by the Emperor Justinian I.

- **Satanism**: this is outright service and worship directed towards the prince of darkness – he's never stopped craving this.

- **Fortuna**: Chance ("Lady Luck") like you see people trusting in as they give themselves to gambling.

- **Covetousness**: The craving to have more and more of something, but are never satisfied. This also is said to be a form of idolatry in Colossians 3:5.

- **Syncretism**: World religions and cultic teachings go against each other, but this consists of the attempt to reconcile disparate or contradictory beliefs, often while trying to meld practices of various schools of thought together. It's the lame amalgamation of all religions into one in denial of the First Commandment, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*"

- **Pantheism** as the worship of "All"—God is the sum total of all that is—and is impersonal. Pantheism literally means "God is All" and "All is God". Pantheism is the false view that everything is of an all-encompassing immanent abstract God; or that the Universe, or nature, and God are equivalent.

- **Buddha**: "self-realization" Gautama (Sanskrit; Pali: Gotama), a personal name said to be Siddhārtha.

- **Allah** (an impersonal warring god, a Monad). This is not the Christian Father God.

- **Astrology**: This is connection with the hosts of heavens.

- **Moloch, Molech, Molekh, or Molek**, (translated directly into king) is either the name of a god or the name of a particular kind of child sacrifice associated with fire. Moloch was historically a worship affiliated with cultures throughout the Middle East, including but not limited to the Jewish, Egyptian, Canaanite, Phoenician and related cultures in North Africa and the Levant. It was all about child sacrifice, and we see this happening today with abortions.

### ***Terms dealing with idol worship as mentioned in the Bible:***

1. Hebrew: **Teraphim**, plural, meaning: "images;" "a family idol". These were family gods (penates) worshiped by Abram's kindred (Josh. 24:14 - "put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt"). "Teraphim" are mentioned by name six times in the Bible: Judg. 17:5; 18:14, 17,18,20; Hosea 3:4. Michal put one in David's bed (1 Sam. 19:13).

2. Hebrew: **Matzzebah**, meaning: something stationed, i.e. a column or (memorial stone); a "statue" set up (Jer. 43:13); a memorial stone like that erected by Jacob (Gen. 28:18; 31:45; 35:14, 20), by Joshua (Joshua 4:9), and by Samuel (1 Sam. 7:12). It is the name given to the statues of Baal (2 Kings 3:2; 10:27).
3. Hebrew: **Chamman** or **Hammanim**, meaning: "sun-images" or "sun-pillars." Hamman is a synonym of Baal, the sun-god of the Phoenicians (2 Chr. 34:4, 7; 14:3,5; Isa. 17:8).
4. Hebrew: **aven** - idol, meaning: "nothingness;" "vanity" (Isa. 66:3; 41:29; Deut. 32:21; 1 Kings 16:13; Ps. 31:6; Jer. 8:19, etc.).
5. Hebrew: **'Elil**, meaning: "a thing of naught" (Ps. 97:7; Isa. 19:3); a word of contempt, used of the gods of Noph (Ezek. 30:13).
6. Hebrew: **'Emah**, meaning: "terror," in allusion to the hideous form of idols (Jer. 50:38).
7. Hebrew: **Miphletzeth**, meaning: "a fright;" "horror" (1 Kings 15:13; 2 Chr. 15:16).
8. Hebrew: **Bosheth**, meaning: "shame;" "shameful thing" (Jer. 11:13; Hosea 9:10); as characterizing the obscenity of the worship of Baal.
9. Hebrew: **Gillulim**, (a word of contempt), meaning: "dung;" "refuse" (Ezek. 16:36; 20:8; Deut. 29:17, marg.).
10. Hebrew: **Shikkuts**, meaning: "filth;" "impurity" (Ezek. 37:23; Nahum 3:6).
11. Hebrew: **Semel**, meaning: "likeness;" "a carved image" (Deut. 4:16).
12. Hebrew: **Tselem**, meaning: "a shadow" (Dan. 3:1; 1 Sam. 6:5), as distinguished from the "likeness," or the exact counterpart.
13. Hebrew: **Temunah**, meaning: "similitude" (Deut. 4:12-19). Here Moses forbids the several forms of Gentile idolatry.
14. Hebrew: **'Atsab**, meaning: "a figure;" from the root "to fashion," "to labor;" denoting that idols are the result of man's labor (Isa. 48:5; Ps. 139:24, "wicked way;" literally, as some translate, "way of an idol").
15. Hebrew: **Tsir**, meaning: a form;" "shape" (Isa. 45:16).
16. Hebrew: **Maskith**, meaning: "device" (Lev. 26:1; Num. 33:52). In Lev. 26:1, the words "image of stone" (King James Version) denote "a stone or *cippus* with the image of an idol, as Baal, Astarte, etc." In Ezek. 8:12, "chambers of imagery" (*maskith*), are "chambers of which the walls are painted with the figures of idols;" compare ver. 10,11.
17. Hebrew: **Pesel**, meaning: "a graven" or "carved image" (Isa. 44:10-20). It denotes also a figure cast in metal (Deut. 7:25; 27:15; Isa. 40:19; 44:10).
18. Hebrew: **Massekah**, meaning: "a molten image" (Deut. 9:12; Judg. 17:3,4).