

Keeping Ourselves From Idols

1 John 5:21

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In this lesson we are going to look at some of the idols that people have in modern day America. This will not be idols like statues or figures that people worship but they will be things that take the number one spot in the lives and hearts of people and often keep them from getting saved or if they are saved keep them from loving and serving God as they should.

In 1 John 5:21 we see that the last verse in the book tells us to keep ourselves from idols. This verse will apply directly to the tribulation saints because the anti-christ will set up an image and require everyone to worship it. But we can make a spiritual and practical application for us today in the church age because there are many idols that we must keep ourselves from today.

In Galatians 5:19-21 we see that idolatry is mentioned as a work of the flesh. There are two things that we can see from this. First of if it is of the flesh then it is not of God. Therefore the Holy Spirit is not going to be behind anything that is promoting idolatry of some kind. The second thing is that since it is a work of the flesh it is going to affect anyone who has flesh. Therefore everyone will be tempted in some way with idolatry of some kind.

Another very important verse concerning idolatry is found in Colossians 3:5. According to this verse we see that covetousness is idolatry. Remember that idolatry is a work of the flesh so when our flesh wants something more than it wants God it will become an idol to us. How we form idols in our heart is simple. We just take God out of the number one spot and replace him with something else. It can be all sorts of stuff that we replace God with as we will see later in the lesson.

Therefore as saved born again children of God we have to be on guard at all times because the heart and the flesh are deceitful and it is so easy for things to slip in and steal the place that God should occupy in our hearts. This is not saying that we cannot love other things but we have to keep the other things that we love in their proper place and not let them come before God, and this is the hard part.

Common Idols in America Today :

Below we will list numerous idols that people worship in today's society. We will list a verse that speaks against them and then give a brief illustration of how they are idols.

1) Money (1 Timothy 6:10)

- Note that it is not the money itself that is wrong it is the love of money. The love of money is the root of all evil. That one verse sheds a lot of light on the subject of problems in the world today. At the root of most every problem is going to be money.
- Today people will do just about anything for money. Many saved people will neglect God, his word and serving him all because of the desire to have or make more money.

- Under this category one could place material possession. America is in trouble today with debt all because of the desire to have things that we cannot afford. A possession could be an idol just the same as money, because it takes money to have possessions.
- The question to ask yourself is do you have money or does it have you.
- Now when we as saved people put money or making money ahead of God then it becomes an idol. Now I am not talking about when you are required by your job to work on Sunday I am talking about when you choose to work instead of serving God when it was not required just because you wanted the extra money.

2) Education (**2 Timothy 3:7** and **Colossians 2:8**)

- First let me say that I am not against education but as Bob Jones Sr. used to say “Education without Salvation is Damnation”.
- Today people have made a God out of education. People think that just because someone has a degree or several degrees that they have to be right.
- This has done much damage to Christianity in America. The reason churches have so much false doctrine in them today is because people think that just because the pastor has been to seminary then what ever he says has to be right. They never look it up in the word of God and see if he is right.
- The Holy Spirit is the interpreter of the word of God and he will show you what is right. It doesn’t matter how many degrees your Pastor has check out what he says he just may have been taught wrong.
- Today kids are told if they do not go to college they cannot succeed so now we have tons of drop outs with college loans and no training to do jobs that are needed such as skilled labor jobs. The truth is colleges is not for everyone and look at how many successful people by the world’s standards do not have a college degree.
- Education is a great thing but do not let it become an idol in your heart whether it is your own education or someone else’s.

3) Pleasures (**2 Timothy 3:4**)

- Notice that the verse says lovers of pleasures more that lovers of God. This is a good picture of America today. This category can include many things, such as sex, sensual things, hobbies, recreation, entertainment etc.
- Sex is definitely a god in America today just look at the TV shows, movies, commercial advertising, and magazine covers. Sex in itself is not wrong as long as it is in the confines of marriage between a husband and a wife. The problem comes from people wanting to take it outside of what it was intended for through fornication, adultery, homosexual behavior, pornography, etc. Then they do not care at all about what God word has said on the matter they are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.
- This same thing can happen with hobbies and recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, crafts, sports, etc. When we put these things ahead of God or do these things more than we attend church and read and study God’s word they are to us an idol.
- Think about it like this there are parents that will run their kids to every kind of event on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday nights plus all day on Saturday, but come Wednesday Night and Sunday Night they are too tired to come to the house of God. This has become an idol. If you doubt this just go to the little league park and watch how the

parents act. Or go to a Little Miss Beauty Pageant and watch those moms. It is unreal what people are doing to their kids today.

- Many Men and women will spend small fortunes on hunting and fishing equipment and yet give the very minimum if that at church or for missions.
- If we really think about it we are a nation given over to pleasures instead of simply enjoying the gifts God has given us. It is always about what we don't have instead of what we do have.

4) Themselves (**2 Timothy 3:2**)

- Men truly are lovers of their own selves today. We live in a "me" society, all people worry about is how something is going to affect them.
- If you want to see this at its best just look at "Face Book". Have you ever noticed how self-oriented most "Face Book" post are. They are all about the person writing them. I know it can be used as a good tool to keep up with family and friends, but for the most part it is just a public forum for people to draw attention to themselves 24 hours a day.
- We should remember the statement of Paul, "in my flesh dwelleth no good thing"
Romans 7:18.

5) Fame (**John 12:41-43**)

- As far as the world is concerned it is not hard for us to see that fame and fortune is a great idol in America. We have a reality show called "American Idol".
- In the reference we gave for fame we see that there are people who want publicly profess Jesus because they loved the praises of man more than the praises of God.
- This is the same reason that saved adults and teenagers will not witness for God or try and live godly in front of a wicked world. It is because we do not want to be made fun of or laughed at.
- Whether we admit it to our self or not no one likes to be the outcast or shunned by everyone else. But we have no be careful about this as a saved person as being liked or being popular can be an idol in our lives.

6) Technology (**Psalm 106:39** and **Ecclesiastes 7:29**)

- This is becoming an idol very quickly with saved people in the church today. While there are large benefits to using technology for God there are many areas in which it can harm us also. There are many who think that if their church's computers, sound system, website, video ministry, projector system, lights, etc. are not on the cutting edge of technology then they are not effectively serving God.
- While all of those things can be helpful in a ministry what saves souls is the preaching of the gospel of the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (**Romans 1:16** and **1 Corinthians 1:18**). We have gotten so wrapped up in technology we have forgot about the power of God through prayer and his word.
- This can happen in our personal lives to if we are not careful. What technology you have has become a status symbol. There are some that think they are better than others because they have a newer or better computer or cell phone than the next person does.
- The technology industry is making a killing of everyone else wanting to keep up with the Jones' when it comes to technology.

- The argument is that it is the information age. Then why are we dumber and getting less done for God than in any other time in church history.

7) Convenience (**Acts 24:25**)

- We are a society that thrives on convenience. No one wants to wait on anything. This has destroyed many churches in America.
- Today churches are doing everything in their power to making the services convenient for their members. From worldly music, to anything goes style of worship, to short sermons so no one has to worry about staying long. What they have done is to take God right out of the service and they don't even miss him.
- The reference that we gave is an instance where someone was going to wait on a more convenient time to get saved. There is never a more convenient time to get saved than right now because you are not promised the next second let alone another day.

One of the best ways for us to avoid these idols in our lives is to be aware of them being an idol in our lives. But the best ways for saved born again people to avoid having idols of any kind in our lives is to practice **Matthew 22:37-40** and we will be a lot better off now and in the world to come.

Keeping Ourselves From Idols : Handout
1 John 5:21

1) What is the name of the list where idolatry is found in the 5th chapter of Galatians and what do we see from this concerning the sin of idolatry?

2) What is idolatry called in Colossians 3:5 and why is this significant?

3) Below list modern day Examples of idols that we have in America. With each one list a reference and an example for the idol.

4) What is a good verse that will help us concerning the subject of idols?