

COUNTERFEIT GODS WEEK 1

Our Idol-Making Factories

What is an Idol?

And God spoke all these words, saying,

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

"You shall have no other gods before me.

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. "You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."

Exodus 20:1-3

"...Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength..."

Mark 12:29-30

"...for my people have committed two evils:

they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

Jeremiah 2:13

Fundamentally, idolatry always has two aspects:

- Rejecting God's sovereignty (which is a rejection of God); and
- Worshipping something or someone in God's place.

What we worship in place of God may or may not be represented by a graven image, but it is no less idolatry. Therefore, the person who pursues wealth as his functional God is no less an idolater than the person who worships a Buddha statue.

Key Quotes from Tim Keller

"The human heart takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them."

"However, anything in life can serve as an idol, a God-alternative, a counterfeit god. If anything becomes more fundamental than God to your happiness, meaning in life, and identity, then it is an idol."

“We think that idols are bad things, but that is almost never the case. The greater the good, the more likely we are to expect that it can satisfy our deepest needs and hopes. Anything can serve as a counterfeit god, especially the very best things in life. What is an idol? It 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. A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living.”

Discussion Questions

1. How is a rejection of God’s sovereignty in our lives ultimately a rejection of God himself? In other words, what do our idols say about our beliefs about God?
2. Have someone read aloud this quote from Puritan theologian David Clarkson:

“When the mind and heart is set upon anything more than God, when anything is more valued, more intended, anything more trusted, more loved, or our endeavors more for anything other than God, that is soul worship which is due only to God.”

Now, think about those people/things in life we normally think about a lot, value greatly, trust in, love, and work for. What are some examples? When do they become idols?

3. Now, let’s get honest. What are some areas in your life where idolatry may be at work? Get specific. How can your group begin to pray for you in this area?