

# Counterfeit Gods • Session 1

## Idolatry: A Clear & Present Danger

Take the time to read Daniel 1:1-4 and 3:1-30. What stands out to you about these young men?

How would you summarize the commandments of God delivered through Moses in Exodus 20:3-6, Leviticus 26:1 and Deuteronomy 11:16-17 these young men would have known?

We dare not blow off idolatry as an Old Testament transgression with little 21<sup>st</sup> century relevance in light of the plurality of New Testament warnings against it. In your own words, how would you summarize...

- Romans 1:24-25 -
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 -
- 1 Corinthians 10:14 -
- Galatians 5:19-21 -
- 1 John 5:21-
- Revelation 21:7-8 -
- Revelation 22:15 -

We've been plainly told that the only "image" worthy of our adoration and allegiance is Jesus. He is "the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4), "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb 1:3).

In light of the passages referenced above, in your own words, what is idolatry?

"For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."

(1 Thes 1:9-10)

## Counterfeit Gods • Session 2

# Divine Perspective on Idolatry

God's prohibition of idolatry given in the Ten Commandments was rooted in the fact that he is "a jealous God" (Exo 20:5). He will not accept our divided allegiance. His Son pointed out the need to choose between one or the other when he spoke of one prominently timeless idol—money. "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matt 6:24). We cannot ride the fence. Our calling is to follow the Lord wholeheartedly (Matt 22:36-38).

Idols pull our hearts away from God. He is our almighty Creator and Savior. He has always been and will always be. Therefore, his perspective is priceless. Listen to what he says...

- **Idols are nothing.** In your own words, how would you summarize the message of:
  - Psalm 115:1-8 –
  - Isaiah 41:21-29 –
  - 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 –

Idols hold no significance other than what we assign to them (Exo 32:4).

- **Idols have to be made.** What important points of application do these passages make?
  - Exodus 32:1 –
  - Isaiah 44:9-20 –
  - Isaiah 46:1-4 –

Idols didn't exist before men and women. They were and are made by people. They will be among the things destroyed when this world comes to an end (2 Pet 3:10). Meanwhile, how do idols "allow" people to do anything they want (Exo 32:6; Col 2:23)?

- **Idols "take," but give no blessing in return.** Again, using the example of the golden calf, notice what was required of the people in order to fashion the idol (Exo 32:2-4). What did the idol give in return? Contrast that with the living God—who requires sacrifice—but blesses far more abundantly than what man gives to him (Mal 3:6-10).

In light of the passages referenced above, why is it so vital that Christians fight to "keep" themselves from idols (1 John 5:21)?

## Counterfeit Gods • Session 3

### Lovers of Self

In 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Paul warns Timothy about “times of difficulty” to come. Instead of living as “lovers of God” (3:4), people would (and do) devote themselves to counterfeits. At the top of the Spirit’s list? “Lovers of self” (3:2). In your own words, what does it mean to be a “lover of self” rather than a “lover of God”?

Why is it so devastating to spiritual life and health to be a “lover of self”?

In what way is the love of self a “counterfeit God”?

Take a few moments to reflect on the way varying aspects of life are drastically affected when self is placed before God. How do these areas deteriorate when, for all practical purposes, “I am god”?

- My occasional “mistakes” –
- Your “sins” against me –
- Possessions –
- Worship –
- Marriage –
- Sexuality –
- Friendship –
- Enemies –
- Wisdom –
- Freedom –
- Disappointment –
- Salvation –

## Counterfeit Gods • Session 4

# Covetousness, Which is Idolatry

The apostle Paul unmistakably connects the deadly dots of idolatry for us on two different occasions.

- In Ephesians 5:5, he confidently asserts, “For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is **covetous (that is, an idolater)**, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”
- To the saints in Colosse, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and **covetousness, which is idolatry**. On account of these the wrath of God is coming” (Col 3:5-6).

In your own words, what is covetousness?

In Acts 17:16, Luke records, “Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.” Could the same thing be said of our cities? If so, in what way?

In Exodus 20, what was the first of the “Ten Commandments”?

And what was the tenth of the “Ten Commandments”?

Having had our perspective shaped by the Spirit of God through Paul in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, what should we make of the ancient correlation between the first and tenth commandments in Exodus 20?

In your own words, what is God communicating in:

- Proverbs 11:4 –
- Ecclesiastes 5:10 –
- 1 Timothy 6:9-10 –
- 1 Corinthians 5:11 –

## Counterfeit Gods • Session 5

# The Addiction of Materialism

Covetousness is the drug which leads to the addiction of materialism. Sit down for one hour in front of a television and pay specific attention to the messages being communicated. How would you summarize the basic substances of those messages?

What should we make of the Preacher's remarks in Ecclesiastes 2:1-11?

In your own words, what is the "American dream"?

What should we make of the "American dream" in light of what we read in Matthew 19:16-30?

How do young disciples of Christ sometimes treat the "American dream" as more desirable than the wisdom of God?

How do older disciples of Christ sometimes treat the "American dream" as more desirable than the wisdom of God?

In your own words, what is God communicating in:

➤ 1 Timothy 6:6-8 –

➤ Hebrews 13:5 –

➤ Psalm 101:1-4 –

➤ Luke 8:7, 14 –

## Counterfeit Gods • Session 6

### Busyness

To maintain houses filled with idols, so many live lives of unprecedented busyness. We have more indulgent time than any generation that has ever come before us. It takes us less time to cook, clean, travel and communicate. Ours is an age of absolute convenience. We can save more time accomplishing the basic tasks of life than any generation before us, and yet we constantly complain as if we had less time than any of them!

What must modern disciples remember from the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21?

On the flipside, how would you summarize the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 4:6?

Take the time to read the details recorded for us in Matthew 14:22-23, Mark 1:35, 6:30-32, Luke 4:42, 5:16 and 6:12. What should we take away from those details?

In your own words, what is being prescribed (and why) by the Spirit of God in:

➤ 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 –

➤ 2 Thessalonians 3:12 –

➤ 1 Timothy 2:1-2 –

In everyday terms, how does busyness serve as a counterfeit god in the lives of so many?

## Counterfeit Gods • Session 7

# Control

Everyone lives for something and if that something isn't the "living and true God" (1 Thes 1:9), it will be a false god—an idol. An idol is anything more important to you than God. Therefore, you can turn even very good things into idols. You can turn a good thing like family, success, acceptance, money, your plans, etc. into a God thing—into something you worship and place at the center of your life.

That is precisely what sin is—building your life and basing your meaning on anything (even a good thing) more than God. One of our typical (and often-overlooked) weak spots? Control.

- In what way do people "worship" the idol of control?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- *Why* do people worship the idol of control?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Can you think of some Biblical examples of people who took control when it didn't belong to them and got themselves in trouble with God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Can you think of some Biblical examples of people who turned control over to God and were commended for doing so?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- If I recognize that I'm prone to cling to control as a counterfeit god, what do I need to remember and work on this week?

# Counterfeit Gods • Session 8

## Approval

Everyone lives for something and if that something isn't the "living and true God" (1 Thes 1:9), it will be a false god—an idol. An idol is anything more important to you than God. Therefore, you can turn even very good things into idols. You can turn a good thing like family, success, acceptance, money, your plans, etc. into a God thing—into something you worship and place at the center of your life.

That is precisely what sin is—building your life and basing your meaning on anything (even a good thing) more than God. One of our typical (and often-overlooked) weak spots? Approval.

- In what way do people "worship" the idol of approval?
  
- Why do people worship the idol of approval?
  
- Can you think of some Biblical examples of people who sought the approval of men over and against the approval of God? How did it turn out for them?
  
- Can you think of some Biblical examples of people who sought the approval of God above and beyond the approval of all others? How did it turn out for them?
  
- If I recognize that I'm prone to cling to approval as a counterfeit god, what do I need to remember and work on this week?



## Counterfeit Gods • Session 9

# Comfort

Everyone lives for something and if that something isn't the "living and true God" (1 Thes 1:9), it will be a false god—an idol. An idol is anything more important to you than God. Therefore, you can turn even very good things into idols. You can turn a good thing like family, success, acceptance, money, your plans, etc. into a God thing—into something you worship and place at the center of your life.

That is precisely what sin is—building your life and basing your meaning on anything (even a good thing) more than God. One of our typical (and often-overlooked) weak spots? Comfort.

- In what way do people “worship” the idol of comfort?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- *Why* do people worship the idol of comfort?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Can you think of some Biblical examples of people who sought their own personal comfort over and against the comfort of a right relationship with God? How did it turn out for them?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Can you think of some Biblical examples of people who sought the comfort of a right relationship with God above and beyond even their own personal comfort? How did it turn out for them?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- If I recognize that I'm prone to cling to comfort as a counterfeit god, what do I need to remember and work on this week?



## Counterfeit Gods • Session 11

# The Key to Keeping Ourselves From Idols

At the conclusion of his letter (1 John 5:18-21), John writes:

We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

What's the key to keeping ourselves from idols?

- Harmonizing our lives with God-revealed reality.
- Viewing everything in relation to God and his will.
- Consistently reminding ourselves that this world and the things that fill it are temporary. God and our souls are not.
- Putting into practice what we know as children of God.

In 1 John 5:18-21, what does John mean when he writes...

- “Everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- “He who was born of God protects him”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- “The whole world lies in the power of the evil one”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- “The Son of God has come and has given us understanding”?