

Keep Yourselves from Idols

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Date: 02 December 2012

[0:00] 1 John 5 verse 21 Of course here in this enlightened age that we live in this enlightened land of Australia, we don't need to worry about idols, do we?

There's no idols in Australia, is there? We think of idols, I know, as a youngster on a stopover, I was in Hong Kong and there was idols everywhere.

You could buy them, you could buy them in jade, in all kinds of precious stones, carved beautifully. You could buy all manner of Buddhas and you name it, that were there in the marketplace.

And I bought one. I bought an idol, it was a crucifix. That's an idol too. I didn't know any better at the time and I had it for a time and then it was discarded.

Idols, idols, there's idols of all kinds. And they're not all just carved out of stone or wood or metal. Just what is an idol? It's something that takes God's place.

[1:37] It's something that takes His rightful place. In our thinking, in our devotion, in our affection. It stands in the place of the one who only is due.

That place of honour and worship. And each of us can be inclined to have our own idol. Our own idol. Maybe you've got a household idol.

It's something that your family is preoccupied with. Some gods, with a small g, can be quite popular. They can be culturally popular. Accepted.

After all, everybody's doing it. It's the accepted norm of our community, of our neighbourhood, of the Aussie culture.

We're going to talk about some of those things that we could consider idols tonight. And the question for each of us really is, what is your idol? What is your idol?

[2:44] It may be hard sometimes to acknowledge that you've got an inclination, a tendency to have an idol. You know, none of us like to admit that. Of the gods, small g, of our own making, of our popular thinking.

It's what we idolise. What we idolise. What we honour. What we admire. What we appreciate. To that degree where it takes his place.

It takes the Saviour's place. Idolatry. Idolatry. It comes from the heart. And it is in the mind. It's what we give ourselves to.

In our time. In our devotion. In our energy. What we apply ourselves to. It can be a substitute. A substitute for God. Ask yourself.

Ask yourself. What do I most love? What do I most think upon? What do I ponder and think upon? What do my thoughts tend to turn to?

[3:45] What do I search out? And hunger and thirst for? Whether it be work. Things are not necessarily bad things of themselves.

Even. Whether it be a hobby. It might be a harmless pursuit. Whether it be an investment. Whether it be your husband. Your wife. Your child. Talking of hobbies.

I met someone just last week. Who was telling me how he loves to make models of tanks. And such like. And. He said.

Oh. This one cost me \$2,000. This. This piece of plastic. That he coloured and painted and. And glued together. And stuck on his shelf.

And he thought nothing of it. That just seemed like. That was just a. A commonplace thing. Could it have been an idol to that man?

[4:43] I think. It possibly could have been. An idol to that man. And he went on to talk about. How he'd won something on the cross lotto. He'd won some several thousand dollars.

But he'd been doing it for years and years and years. Week after week after week. Really. He only just got back. What he put in. And it was. So much loss for.

You know. That allurements. That. That thing that. He was attracted to. He was bent on. An idol. Can be our dominating passion. That which feeds our pride.

Or our lust. Or our worldliness. And yet even. It could be harmless things. Of themselves. It could even be. Christian things.

I know Julie was saying. She showed me some article about. Even ministry can be an idol. Where you glorify it. Where it obsesses you. And where you're doing it out of your own strength.

[5:46] But not. Of our Lord's strength. And where we can even glorify busyness. Where we can. Just get. So. Preoccupied. With things that not.

Are not necessarily wrong. Of themselves. Yet can become. A substitute. For. That relationship. With our Lord. And Savior. Our idol. It can have that magnetic attraction.

That pulls us. That draws us. That lures us. That traps us. Friends. There's things that. Each one of us might consider. Relatively harmless things. Yet can become.

An idol to us. Seemingly innocent things. Can become those. God substitutes. In our lives. We all need to be guarded. About that. It could be. The enjoyments of life.

Whether. Of your garden. It's not. My garden's not my idol. You can see how. How I don't really care for it. That much. And Julie keeps telling me off.

[6:44] Or it could be. Your house becomes your idol. And you just want everything. Just so. Spick and span. And you spend every waking minute. Worrying about the dust. And the cobwebs. You want everything.

Just tizzied up. So perfectly. So. It could be your car. And you could. Have this. You know. Like Marjorie. Has that beautiful car out there. And she just cares for it.

So well. Yeah. And you know. I know my car. I. The first time I polished it. I think in a few years.

Today. So you can go out there. And admire it afterwards. But we can. Get so attracted to things.

That we. We just want the dust to be so. And just. Yeah. It can be an idol. For us. And we all need to honestly. Search it out. Search it out. Where is that idol? What is that idol for me?

It could be. Young people. Those things that. That the crowd is going after. The latest pop star. The latest movie star. The latest in thing. It can become an idol.

[7:40] Everybody's into it. It's so popular. Search out your heart.

Search out your heart. The word imagination. Contains the word image. And images.

We know. Images and idols. It's the same thing. In the word of God. Imaginations come. To our mind. To our heart. And idolatry.

Idolatry. It's the same thing. It's the same thing. It fills from the heart. It fills that brain space. It occupies our mindset. So much. That it. Crowds out. The place that God should have.

In our lives. In the ten commandments. It says. Thou shalt have. No other gods. Before me. The Lord wants to be first. In our lives. It says.

Thou shalt not make unto thee. Any graven image. Or any likeness. Of anything. That is in the heaven above. Or that is in. The earth beneath. Or that is in. The water. Under the earth.

[8:38] You know. Some well meaning Christians. Have pictures of Christ. Paintings of Christ. Or. Representations of Christ. On the walls of their homes. They think nothing of it.

And yet. It says. Don't make any graven image. Don't make any likeness. Of anything that is in the heaven above. Or the earth beneath. Or that is in the water. Under the earth.

Well meaning Christians. Can have such things. Crucifixes. Even of themselves. It's not something. That the word of God. Would condone. Or support.

It says. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them. Nor serve them. For I the Lord your God. Am a jealous God. Visiting the iniquity. Of the fathers. Upon the children. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them.

Nor serve them. What controls you? If our life is controlled by anger. Anger. Can be our God.

[9:33] Small g. If our life is controlled by fleshly lust. Then lust is our God. If our life is controlled by greed. Then greed can be our God.

Our God. Small g. Is whatever controls our life. God looks into the imagery of our mind. The imaginations of our mind. The word says to cast them down.

Doesn't it? Cast down those imaginations. The imagery of our mind. What does he see when he looks in? With those x-ray eyes. And sees that.

And he tries the reins of our heart. He just tries those reins. Those things that lead us. And drive us. He tries those reins of our heart. And he wants to know. What is in our mind. What are those controlling passions and ambitions? Those dominating things.

[10:30] Idolatry. Through the word of God. It was a common sin of the people of God. Despite the amazing things God did for the children of Israel. They kept lapsing back in this vicious cycle.

Of falling back into those ways of idol worship. And even before Moses came down from the mount. Holding those two tablets. That the Lord God had engraved the Ten Commandments upon.

The people were already there dancing around that golden calf. And downstream history too. Men and women have set up images. To their false gods.

And even in churches where there's stained glass windows. Of all the saints. And all of the representations of Christ. We've got to be guarded about such things brothers and sisters. And be very careful about such representations. And like David. Search out our hearts. And know. Ask God.

[11:34] To search our hearts. To know our thoughts. To examine ourselves. And judge ourselves. What is going on? The idols of our life.

How do we know? What's an idol in my life? How do you spend that time? How do you spend that? Tick. Tick. Tick. How do you spend that time? Is it spent looking on entertainment?

Unduly. Where that obsesses you. It fills every vacant moment. Those things. The movie. The TVs. The sport. The relaxation. Those things that just seem to.

Where did that day go? How did you spend it? How did you waste it? Idols. Compare that to the time that you spend. In the word. In prayer.

I know. I can do more. Friends. We need to consider. Such things. Are we keeping ourselves from idols? If so. God will be first. In our lives.

[12:30] In how we spend that time. With him. Rather than on. Other things that will be wasted. That's not to say. There's need for recreation.

And. Exercise. Profit of the little. It's good to do such things. That's going to benefit you healthy. Keep you healthy. Which is. Good to look after that temple that you've got.

God wants. Wants that temple to do. To last the distance. So. It's good to take. Time. In wise things such as that. Time. What about money? Look at how you spend it.

When you. Do a review of. How that money has been spent. Has it just been. Just. Scattered everywhere. Willy nilly. Spent carelessly. To satisfy.

The desires of your flesh. Comparing that. With how much have you invested. In the Lord's work. And that's not putting anyone. Under a yoke of bondage. What about the Bible that you use?

[13:30] Maybe you could buy yourself. A decent Bible. Maybe you could get yourself. Some decent study material. So that you can. Encourage yourself. So you can grow. In your faith. Maybe there's a missionary cause.

You've. You've heard about. That you think. Well that's something that. We could contribute to. You know. We've heard about Congo. We've heard about. This farm idea. We've heard. About. Many. Missionaries. That we support. There's opportunities to. Invest. In the Lord's work. Am I guilty of idolatry? Are there images in my mind?

Are there things that. Take my love and desires away. From my Lord. What is it that occupies my time? What is it that I spend time. Thinking about. Talking about. Will it be such things as.

My. Work. My wife. My children. Whether it's certain people. That. Seems to just. Take up my time. Whether. That.

[14:27] There's so many things. We could mention. Fill in the blanks. For yourself. What is it that. Is your. Dominating. Thought. That takes your. Attention.

It says. In 1 Corinthians 10. 13. That familiar one. There have no. Temptation. Taken you. But. Such as. Is common to man. But God.

Is. Faithful. Who. Will not suffer you. To be tempted above that. You are able. But. Will. With the temptation. Also. Make a way.

To escape. That you may. Be able. To bear it. Then verse 14. It goes on. Wherefore my dearly beloved. Flee. From. Idolatry. You know.

The temptation. That. You face. Is. Escaped from. As you flee. From idolatry.

[15:21] Run from those things. That will take his place. In your life. All of us have a value system. Australia has a value system. And how do you tell. What you value. You know.

When the architects. Go down to the. Ancient sites. And they get their spades out. And shovels. And start. Wielding the pick.

And digging deep. They see the. Evidence. Of. The civilization. That was. And they draw conclusions. From what they find. From the things that they find.

From the things that the people. Valued. And had in their homes. In their lives. What would they find. If. If. A hundred.

Two hundred years from now. When. You're long gone. And they. They dig. In the. In the. Ruins of your. Home. What will it be that they will find. What will be those objects.

[16:15] That. You are attached to. They'll just be. Dust. Where is our loyalty. Our obsession. What occupies us. You know.

There's a story in Joshua. Chapter six and seven. How the. Children of Israel. Were. Instructed to take. The. City. Of Jericho.

And. It says from verse 18. In part. It says. That they were instructed. Keep yourselves from. The accursed thing. You know. They had to. Wipe things out.

Wipe the place out. And the people out. That was God's instruction. And he said. Keep yourselves from. The accursed thing. Lest you make yourselves. Accursed. When you take of the accursed thing.

And make the camp of Israel. Accursed. And trouble it. But all the silver. Gold. And vessels of brass and iron. Are consecrated unto the Lord. They shall come. Into the treasury. Of the Lord.

[17:11] And Achan. Was a member of the camp. Of Israel. And it says. Achan took. Of the accursed things. He found something. That he coveted after. You know. Whether it was some shiny thing.

Some. Some. Work of art. Some. Perhaps beautiful looking. Garment. Or thing. That he coveted after. And whether it was an actual idol. Or not.

We can't say. But it became an idol. To him. It became an idol. It was something. That he wasn't supposed to have. But Achan hid it. And God knew. God found out. Achan got found out.

And friends. His secret sin. Was idolatry. In effect. While the Israelites. Were dancing for joy. When the Jericho's. Walls fell. And the Lord ruled victory.

Achan. Was stashing a curse. In his tent. He was stashing this. Idolatrous. Thing. In his tent. It was a secret sin. Maybe. Idolatry for you.

[18:08] Could be that secret sin. It could be that thing. That you. Hide away. He carried home. Some forbidden things. He dug up the earth. In his tent. And he buried them there.

He thought nobody knew. But God knew. God knew. And your sin. Will find you out. Sin. Which always begins in the heart. Spilled out. When Achan saw the wealth.

Of the Canaanites. And when we're tempted to sin. In our minds. When we're tempted. We ought to confess that sin. Unto him. Here's a quote.

It says. The worst enemy. That you have. Is yourself. He occupies the same skin. That you occupy. He uses the same brain. That you. Use.

In thinking. Destructive thoughts. He uses the same hands. That you use. To perform. His own deeds. This enemy. Can do you more harm. Than anyone else.

[19:02] He has the greatest handicap. That you have. In your daily Christian life. Recognize. And identify him. He's talking about the self. The self. The self. Colossians 3 verse 5.

It defines idolatry. As covetousness. Idolatry. Is related to being. Covetousness. It's what we chase after. What we chase after. What we want more.

And more. And more of. Could it be. We want more status. We want more power. We want more possessions. We want more. More. More. A preacher.

William Jennings Bryan. Listed several idols. In his culture. He said. Idols could be gold. Fashion. Fame. Ease. Intelligence. Travel. War. Passion. Chance. Dream. There's many modern substitutes. For the golden calf. 1 John 5. 21. Little children. Keep yourselves. From idols.

[19:58] What is our idol? What is our idol? Could it be. The Baptist idol. Fool. You don't speak against the Baptist. So I'm one of them. Could it be.

The brethren idol. Could it be. Whatever denomination. We might have come from. Fool. I don't ever go up my doctrine. That's my sacred cow. Could it be.

The Christmas idol. Where some people just. It's like they glorify. Christmas. Going completely over the top. Could it be. A hobby idol.

In your life. A sport idol. A car idol. You know. We've got to. Pray for Marjorie. With that car. That she. Has got this attachment to. You know. We've got to pray for these ones.

With these attachments. With these idols. In their life. I'm kidding. But. We need to think. What is that idol. In my life. What is it that takes that priority. Away from my Lord.

[20:52] And my relationship with him. What is that God substitute. In my life. It could even be ministry. Sometimes it can be ministry. Where it's taking away.

That relationship with the Lord. Where it's just a. An empty substitute. We can get so busy. Busy. Busy. And neglect what matters. I know that.

Is true. And friends. Think of the idols. Acknowledge them today. I'm going to use some names for some. God.

Small g. We remember. They're just names. They don't mean anything. They're not real. There's no. There's only one God. The name Narcissus.

Narcissus. Was the Greek name for a God. Small g. Again. An imaginary God. Who fell in love with his own reflection in the pool. Can we honestly say that we do not worship self?

[21:52] Self can be seated on the throne. When we chase after personal gain. At others expense. When we obsess ourselves about our own wants. And our own needs.

Self can be a God. Still is today. The Greeks had other gods. Who stood for personal pleasure. Backus. Backus was the God of drink and revelry.

We know people like that. You scarcely see them sober. Backus. The God of drink and revelry. Eros. The God of physical attraction and indulgence.

It's obsessing the culture of Australia today. Pluto. Was the God of wealth. A deification of material values. Above moral and spiritual values.

Some people. Wealth is just the be all and end all. They'll do anything for it. They'll sell their soul. Just to have some trinkets.

[22:51] Some baubles. That they'll leave behind. Acts 17 verse 16. It says, When Paul came to Athens, his spirit was stirred in him. When he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

Paul came to Athens. His spirit was stirred in him. When he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

Now again, as a young man, I was privileged to, I was so privileged to have wealthy parents.

They're not wealthy anymore, but when we had this stopover in Athens, as we went on our several trips back and forth to the UK, deciding where we wanted to live. And we had this stopover in Athens.

And I saw the Acropolis there. I can remember it. And the carvings and the statues that were left, the ruins that were left were still very beautiful. Idolatry can be a beautiful thing.

Athens was a city wholly given to idolatry. They might be beautiful things. Not long ago, I stepped into a Buddhist temple.

[24:05] I've mentioned this, so I think people might have heard it before. I stepped into a Buddhist temple. A friend of mine was a Buddhist, and there were some things going on, and I was invited to go in.

And I walked up to the Buddha, and I went, I went like that on his head. I don't know if I did something sacrilegious, or whatever it was, but it was just a lump of concrete.

It was a lump of concrete. Spray painted with gold paint. Looked all very fancy, and maybe some might admire the artistic value of this.

Ugly looking Buddha. As people bowed down, and gave gifts, and flowers, and burnt incense, and gave adoration, and prayers, to this idol.

And I thought, what a shame. What a shame. Worshipping a lump of concrete. That is the reality of it. But friends, we're worshipping idols today in the West.

[25:09] In the West. Idols by other names. Modern gods. Modern gods. Back then, in days of old, the state demanded worship, as they worshipped Caesar.

There was Caesar worship. And the Christians had to just put some little token, something to make, a little bit of fire, a little bit of incense to burn, and then they could get off scot-free, and just carry on. And some might have lived a duplicitous kind of life, having the best of both worlds. But those that were truly Christians, would have no bar of it. They would have no part of it.

They wouldn't have anywhere, anything to do with it. And friends, the time will come, for us too. Where will we stand?

Will we stand with those who are willing to lay down their lives to not fall into line with such things? Or will we follow suit and just go the easy way?

[26:05] Go with what society decides is right. Go with what society says is the standard. What society says is true. when we know God says it's wrong.

Who will we stand with? Well, we stand with the idols. Some will worship at the shrine of humanity. You know, they join these clubs and lodges and things and do all kinds of good works.

And it seems all quite a worthy cause, and yet we know what underlies such things. It's the shrine of humanity. Man's achievements. Man's worthiness is really ugliness when it stands without God.

And friends, we need to be assured today, where do we stand in relation to idols? The Word of God says, little children, keep yourselves from idols. Prayerfully consider, as we close, prayerfully consider today, could it be those things that we've spoken of tonight, those God substitutes, those things that take our thinking, our devotion, our affection, those things that take our Lord's rightful place?

How do we spend our time? How do we use our money? How do we invest our affections, our love? Will it be on things that matter? Will it be on earthly things or on eternal things?

[27:24] Will it be on those things of value that are beyond the grave? I pray they will. I pray, little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Thank you.