

What is Idolatry? – Family Devotional

Objective: To help redefine what an idol is and to let God determine it and not our culture.

Opening Activity:

- When you think of an idol, what comes to your mind? Let's play a little game and see!
- We're going to play the Word Association Game! Here's how you play:
- Instruct all your family members to close their eyes. The leader is going to say a list of words and, after each word, the rest of the family will write down the first thing that comes to their mind (you can say it out loud if you have young children). Have some fun with the list by including "Dad", "Mom" or other words that will get everyone laughing and having fun together. The final word will be "idol."
- What image came to your mind? Have a discussion about what image came to each person's mind. Find out why they thought of what they did.

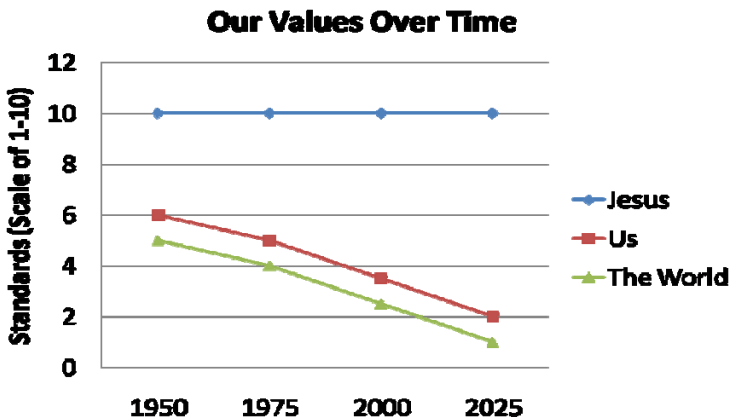
Discussion:

- What is an idol?
- Explain common idea of an idol.
- What does the Bible define as an idol?
- Explain that an idol is something that we value more than God. It is something that controls us by consuming our thoughts, time, and energy.
- *"No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money."*
Matthew 6:24
- What are the things in your life that compete with the Lord to be your master? Why are you tempted to serve them?

The Hidden Idols of Our Culture:

- After you've been following Jesus for a while, it can be tempting to look back and convince ourselves that we have successfully rid ourselves of idols with the serious changes we have made.
- *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."* **Hebrews 12:1**
- There are many things in our lives, the hidden idols of our culture, which hinder us and easily entangle us.
 - Younger kids: The cartoons & the video games you watch & play. Are they violent?
 - Older kids: The movies you watch? Are they pure? How about the video games you play? Are they violent? What kind of lyrics are in your favorite music? What about your clothing; are they modest?

- How do you decide what your standards are for these things? What is pure or modest? How do you decide whether or not a video game is appropriate?
- What about the movies? Does the Motion Picture Association of America decide for us?
- Too often we let our culture be our guide.
- It's very easy to use the world around us as an excuse for having low standards.
- By maintaining a comfortable distance between our standards and those of some people around us, we can feel good about ourselves while justifying behavior that isn't pure and righteous.
 - Illustration for teens & adults:
 - "It's not that bad that I watch movies with some bad scenes in them, I'm not watching X-Rated stuff like the other guys".
 - There was an old show named the Dick Van Dyke Show in which the married couple slept in separate twin beds to avoid the appearance of impurity on their television show. Today, many of us routinely watch shows whose main theme is adultery or premarital sex. How did we get from point A to point B?
- This chart explains the problem and illustrates the effect over time.



- The standard of Jesus is a perfect 10. The red line shows that we may not have the same standard as the world, but look at what happens over time – our standard moves significantly further away from Jesus.
- Why?
- Because our eyes are fixed on the world, not fixed on Jesus.

Challenge:

- Discuss the topics of movies, television, music, and clothing with your family. How does everyone feel about the example being set? How do you make decisions about your standards in these areas?
- Make a decision to take your eyes off of the world, to turn around, and fix your eyes on Jesus!
- *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* **Hebrews 12:2**

Living Sacrifices (Genesis 22) – Family Devotional

Preparation

- Have all of your children bring their favorite stuffed animal to the devotional. You will also need some string, some wood, if you have it, and a fake sword or dagger for each of the children.
 - For older children, you can have them bring their iPods or whatever favorite thing they may have.

Devotional

- Have everyone in the family talk about your favorite stuffed animal...
 - Why is it their favorite?
 - What does it provide for them?
 - Security
 - Encouragement
 - Fun
 - How would you feel if you had to give up your stuffed animal?
- Tell the story of Abraham and Isaac from Gen 22
 - Read/ Paraphrase as the age of your children allow
 - Remind them about the promise God had made to Abraham about making a nation from Isaac (Gen 17:19-21)
- How do you think Abraham felt about his son Isaac?
 - He loved him
 - He cared about him
 - He didn't want to see bad things happen to him
 - Talk about how much you love your children
 - How you would protect them from anything
 - Remind them of a time when you protected them from harm/ injury
 - Talk about loving them enough to teach them about following God.
- Why was Abraham willing to take Isaac and sacrifice him?
 - Because he loved God more than anything else
 - He believed that God was going to do a miracle
 - He trusted God with everything he had, including his son
- How did Abraham show his complete love for God?
 - He obeyed and went to offer Isaac
 - His heart was shown by his willingness to give up Isaac
- Because of his obedience, God did a miracle
 - He provided a Ram so that Isaac could live
 - Abraham ended up not losing his son after all
 - God came through because of Abraham's heart and willingness to sacrifice everything.

Act It Out:

- Replay the story. Have someone pretend to be God talking to Abraham... One child will be Abraham... Their stuffed animal is Isaac... Make a big procession out of it... Have them tie the stuffed animal... Put it on the wood... Get ready to sacrifice the stuffed animal... Then have someone pretend to be a ram caught in a thicket... Celebrate God providing for them!

Lesson Learned:

- God calls us to be willing to give up everything for him.
 - Talk about what keeps us from being willing to sacrifice for God
 - Give practical ideas for the whole family to help everyone to be able to sacrifice for God.

Addicted to God – Family Devotional

Objective: The goal of this devotional is to remind your children/family all of the reasons that we love God. Because of all that God has blessed us, we should be totally dependent on him.

Scripture:

“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1).

Discussion:

- **Question: Have you ever been thirsty and really wanted something to drink? When?** –*after running around/playing a sport/exercising/ etc.*
- **Question: What would you give for a drink of water?** – your favorite toy/ most expensive gadget/allowance/etc

Transition:

- This is what it is like to be addicted to something. We thirst for it and we are willing to give anything for it. Especially - we can't stop talking about.
- Today, we are going to talk about reasons that we love God. Reasons that we should be addicted to God.

Activity:

- Read one of your favorite passages about God and then play a fun twist on the alphabet game. Starting with the letter A, think of one specific reason that you love God and continue around the family until the entire alphabet has been used. Write each reason on a huge piece of paper and hang it in a prominent place in your house where everyone can be reminded of why we love God.

Application:

- Throughout the week, share with one another over dinner why you love God for one of the reasons that you chose for Monday's family devotional.

Scripture Memory:

- “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1).

Compassion for the Lost – Family Devotional

Opening Activity:

The Helpless Sheep Game

- Props: Cake or some kind of treat, blindfolds, two small plastic plates with water on the bottom, two towels to go under the plate, two plastic plates with some sand in them, two towels to go under the plate
- Preparation: Hide the treat in a place where the children cannot find it easily. After you blindfold the children, place the plates on the floor with towels under them.
- Instructions: Have all of the children get on their hands and knees to cat like sheep. Read a description of sheep (Below). Tell them that they will be the sheep and there is a wonderful treat awaiting them but they have no idea where it is. They cannot speak, only “Bah.” They can bah when they are sad, happy whatever. Then you blindfold them. Tell them they have to find the treat. Put the plates on the floor where they will run into them with the blindfolds on. Give them a few minutes to stagger about and run into the plates. After a little while read Matthew 9:36. Then go to the oldest child and ask them if they want a shepherd? If they say yes, remove the blindfold and lead them to the treat. Then tell that child to go to the next oldest child and ask them if they want a shepherd? If they say yes, have them remove the blindfold and lead them to you and you lead the child to the treat. Then tell that child to go to the next oldest child and continue on down.

Discussion Questions & Devotional:

- How did it feel to be blind and running into the obstacles?
- How did knowing that there was a treat out there affect your thinking?
- Did you ever feel like giving up on the treat?
- How did it feel when you were offered a shepherd to help you find the treat?

Read Matthew 9:35-10:7

- Why did Jesus call the people “harassed and helpless” when they didn’t have a shepherd?
- How does this idea connect to our game?
- How does having idols in our life make us “harassed and helpless”?
- What are some of the idols we see in the lives of the people around us? In school? In families? At work?
- It says that Jesus had compassion on them. What does compassion mean?
- Do we feel compassion towards people or do we look down on them?
- If we just look down on them, how does that lead us to act towards them?
- Have we ever been led astray by idols?
- How should our own mistakes help us to have more compassion on people?

- How does this relate to the game we played?
- What was Jesus' response to the compassion he felt?
- How does this relate to our game?
- What are some of the things that keep us from acting on compassion?
- What would a compassionate response look like for us this week? (Share passages to address these areas)
 - Disobedience: Matthew 28:18-20, I Samuel 15:22-23
 - Fear: Joshua 1:9, Ephesians 6:19-20
 - Laziness: Proverbs 18:9
- How do these relate to idols that enter our life?
- Share decisions as a family and pray for each other

Ideas to make this age appropriate:

- The devo should be fine as it is for kids elementary through high school.
- For toddlers you can change the questions to:
 - How does it feel when you are lost?
 - If you saw someone who was lost how could you help them?
 - How would you feel if you were lost and no one would help you?
 - Jesus came to help us know how to find God. How can we help others find God this week?
 - Another idea is to do a "Dora" type game where you put one of their dolls on their bed and say, "Dolly is so sad because she doesn't know God. Let's go help her." Then you have a map with three "obstacles" to overcome in order to help the doll. One could be the monster of disobedience (an ugly stuffed animal or Dad) and he is overcome by reading Matthew 28:19-20 and saying "I will obey God!" Next could be the river of fear (lay a blanket on the floor) and it is overcome by reading Joshua 1:9 and jumping over the river. Lastly could be the pit of laziness (a hallway filled with pillows) and this one is overcome by reading Proverbs 18:9 and resolving to be diligent, fighting through the pillows. Then get to the doll and read John 3:16a and celebrate as the doll is happy now that they know God!
 - Then you can discuss how disobedience, fear and laziness keep us from helping people know God.

Wholehearted Love for God - Family Devotional

The main Idea: “To love me is to know me.”

- Identifying and getting rid of idols is not easy. It takes effort and commitment. Because things that serve as idols are things that we know very well, enjoy a lot, and often love on a deep level. So at this point give yourself some credit if you have identified your idols and began to eliminate them. The next step after getting rid of idols is to replace the space they held with a deep love for God.
- What do you think happens to the space something held when you get rid of it?

Illustration: Vacuum Bag (Explain the concept of a vacuum machine):

Air is mechanically driven out of the vacuum bag, which leaves a void. That void causes air to rush into the bag, which carries dust and other particles.

- Our hearts work the same way, when we remove something, it creates a vacuum that causes something else to rush in to replace it.
- We must choose to replace our idols with a love for God.
- How do we develop a love for God?

- Name 5 people who you know very well.
- Name 5 people who you love with all your heart.
- How many people are in both groups?

- Now name something that only you have experienced with the people you love. (A loving relationship comes with special incidents, circumstances, situations, knowledge, etc.)

- Is your relationship with God special? If so, name something that only you know about or have experienced with your relationship with God. (What’s special between you and God?)

- To love God with all your heart is to know Him very well and to have a special relationship.
- To love God with all your heart is to seek Him with a passion... **Read Jeremiah 29:13.**
- We need study God (reading His word, prayer).
- We need to know what He likes (love, humility, etc) and dislikes (lying, pride, disobedience, etc.)... **Read Galatians 5:16-26.**

Decision:

We need to give Him a commitment with our hearts that will last a lifetime.