

What is an idol?

- In the Bible we read about idols of gold, statues made out of ignorance to God, man made pictures and carvings that people bowed down and worshiped in place of God
- Examples in today's society are mostly different: celebrities, money, cars, clothes
- There are also things we can idolise that we can't see, like self image (idolising yourself), reputation and respect. We should be even more careful of these subtle things.

Revelation 19v9-10: This is a really interesting verse that taught me a lot – have a read of it. Not only does the angel tell John not to bow down to him, but he also adds that he is “a fellow servant with you” - even the angels of God know where they stand and show a true example of humility and loyalty to God who is the only one worthy of our worship.

Acts 16v16-18 – these verses warn of how something can initially seem well intended or innocent, but can in time be a hinderance.

What is idol worship?

- One of the first signs of idolising something or someone is spending too much time on it.
- A good example might be if you're becoming too concerned about your looks, you might spend too long in front of the mirror, and be late to church
- People also spend a lot of money on idols – maybe cashing out on clothes or a new car
- You can worship someone by striving to be like them – for example musicians or sports personalities

2 Kings 17v33 – the people here had double standards – worshiping God then worshiping their own idols. How can we really worship God if we disobey his first command – worshiping no god but him.

Consequences

- The book of Isaiah tells us that people are disgraced, ignorant, burdened and captive as a result of idol worship and worshiping false gods.
- Using the late to church example, after something starts taking up your time, it then starts changing the way you think
- Things that weren't or aren't important become important, and then your priorities become confused. You'll give yourself less or no time for good things like bible reading, and then you'll drift further and further away from God, maybe even without realising it.

Big read - Exodus 32 (no the Golden Calf was *not* a roman farming award!)

At this point in Exodus, Moses has been at the top of a mountain for a long time, in the presence of God in a cloud, and the people at the bottom of the mountain (who aren't allowed up) are getting frustrated. They make a golden calf to worship instead of God – out of pure impatience and self-indulgence.

From verse 9 God explains his great anger against them, and from verse 27 the consequences are revealed – a brutal death for many of the idol worshipers.

Psalm 115v8 – those who make idols will become like them! Who wants to be a hairy half-brain footballer like David Beckham, eh?

Response – this is the most important part of the study!

- Idolatry (worshiping idols) starts with forgetting God's importance in our lives. If we always remember to thank God for all the good things he does, then it's going to be easier to stay close to him, and not let anything else get in the way.
- What has your idol done for you? Is there something you can't rely on God for? Remember that he is the provider and he cares for you.
- God is love, and he wants you not to worry! If there's something in your life that's bothering you, or you want to organise your time better, then pray about it.

Final Word!

I don't want everyone to think that you're not allowed to have hobbies because you're a Christian! It's okay to enjoy spending time watching tele (maybe not X-Factor though...), admire a famous person or someone you really look up to, spend a lot of money on something, or spend a long time in front of the mirror.

*As long as these things don't mean you disobey God, or come before what he wants you to be doing. We all have hobbies, things we like to collect or own, people we admire, places we like to go; we need to make sure we seek God in these things - that means praying!*

The fact is that the devil wants you to stress over these things, so much so that you ignore God. There are lots of easy ways you can stop that from happening:

- Pray regularly, bringing your worries to God, who cares for you.
- Read your bible too, to learn more about why we should be more focussed on God
- Talk to your parents, or friends or other family members, about anything you're struggling with. They will be happy to talk to you. Or an elder, or someone on the youth team!
- Review your day-to-day life sometimes. Think, how much time have I spent playing games this week? How much time have I spent hanging out with friends? -have I missed a youth meeting? Have I missed my bible reading? Did I pray about that thing?
- Fellowship – spend quality time with friends from church, encouraging each other and sharing thoughts and advise together.