

ST Unit: Modern Day Idols, Lesson 1 Teaching Outline:
“Objects of Worship”

Date: August 6, 2017

Study Text: Deuteronomy 5:7-9; 1 John 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 10:14-31; Colossians 3:1-5

Family Theme: The Problem of Idolatry

CONNECT:

Option 1: Begin by asking the following:

- *What do you think of when you hear the word idol or idolatry?*
- *What does idolatry look like in the world today?*
- *What are some things that can become idols to modern people?*

Option 2: Before your group arrives, write the following statements on the whiteboard: You shall have no other Gods before me. You shall not make for yourself any image or likeness. Begin the session by discussing the following questions

- *Why do you think these commandments are the first two of the Ten Commandments God gave His people?*
- *How are these two commandments relevant today?*
- *How is making an idol different from making a statue?*

Transition: *Idolatry may often look different today than it did in Bible times, but it is just as real. In this lesson we will examine God’s commandment to worship Him exclusively—to have no other gods besides Him, and how we can avoid getting caught up in idolatry.*

LEARN:

1. Worship God, and God Alone (Deuteronomy 5:7-9)

When we obey God's commandment, our obedience in putting God first will reverberate for generations to come, as will the consequences of our disobedience. His commandment is serious and very specific: His people are not to worship idols, period.

APPLY: Worship God alone, acknowledging that He cannot be reduced to our level or to the level of anything He has created.

- *Why is it so important that we worship God alone?*
- *What are some of the things that can become idols to people in our culture?*
- *What do you think it looks like to worship God alone?*

2. The True and Living God Is the Only One Worthy of Worship (1John 5:19-21)

God has not changed. He will help us to think, feel, and act on the truth that there is one true and living God and that He alone is worthy of our worship. We can find fulfillment in worshipping Him.

APPLY: Find fulfillment and satisfaction by worshipping the one true God who designed us to worship Him.

- *What are some good things God has given that could become idols in our lives, taking the place only He deserves.*
- *How might technology become an idol?*
- *How is the command to keep ourselves from idols countercultural?*

EXPLORE: Believers living in John's day knew that there were many worldly objects of worship and they understood that pagan idols were false gods. Pagans often worshiped many gods, so the concept of one true and living God was foreign to them. Each false god was thought to have power over some aspect of human life or some dimension of nature. Rather than understanding all they experienced as part of the creation of the one-and-only, all-powerful, all-knowing, loving God who sent His only Son to redeem fallen mankind, they compartmentalized their lives, praying prayers and offering sacrifices in a desperate at-

tempt to appease one of many gods believed to be controlling their health, their crops, the safety of their family, and their ultimate fate.

3. Do Whatever Is Necessary to Avoid Idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14-31; Colossians 3:1-5)

Giving priority to anything besides God will lead to emptiness and sin. We must guard against all that is advanced in opposition or competition with Him, willing at all times to put worldly, idolatrous temptations to death.

APPLY: Live courageously, choosing a life of worship to God alone.

- *How might avoiding idolatry look for believers in the 21st century?*
- *Does avoiding idolatry mean that believers can never enjoy good things God has provided? Explain your answer.*

RESPOND:

Option 1: At the end of Chapter 2 of his book, *The Pursuit of God* (©1992, WingSpread Publishers a division of Zur Ltd., Camp Hill, PA), A.W. Tozer wrote a prayer in which he expressed to God that he struggled with things that competed with God for his affection. He asked God to root out all such things and to take His rightful place in his heart. Ask the following:

- *Is there something in your life you need to limit or abandon so God has no rival in your life?*
- *What steps will you take this week to limit or abandon this thing so God has no rival for your worship and affection?*

Option 2: Give each group member a piece of paper and something to write with. Ask them to list the top 10 priorities in their lives. Where is God on their list? What can they do this week to make God their highest priority?

ST Unit: Modern Day Idols, Lesson 2 Teaching Outline:
“The Lure of Materialism”

Date: August 13, 2017

Study Text: Deuteronomy 8:10-18; Colossians 3:1-5; 1 John 2:15-16; Luke 12:13-34; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; Matthew 6:24-33

Family Theme: Honoring God with Our Treasure

CONNECT:

Option 1: Before your group members arrive, write or display Matthew 6:21 on the markerboard or screen. Begin the session by asking the following:

- *What did Jesus mean when He said our hearts will be where our treasure is?*
- *What are some things people in our culture really care about based on their spending?*
- *What checking or charge account entries might indicate that a person cares deeply about the Lord and His work here on earth?*

Option 2: Begin the session by asking the following:

- *How would you define the term materialism?*
- *How can Christians keep from getting caught up in materialism?*

Transition: *Very few things tell more about us than how we spend our money. In today’s lesson we will see how we can seek God and His kingdom first, and keep from getting caught up in an unhealthy desire for material things.*

LEARN:

1. We Honor God With Our Money Rather Than Investing in Our Own Pleasure and Comfort (Deuteronomy 8:10-18; Luke 12:13-34; Colossians 3:1-5; 1 John 2:15-16)

Deuteronomy 8:10-18 helps us to see why we must guard against worshiping good things rather than the giver of those good things. God knows our hearts and rightfully and lovingly demands our complete obedience and love, knowing that is what is best for us.

APPLY: We practice good stewardship, investing first in the things of God.

- *What are some ways that our culture encourages worship of the good things in life?*
- *Is it wrong for Christians to possess good things? Explain your answer.*
- *Why do you think Jesus referred to the rich man who planned to build larger barns to store all of his grain, as a fool?*

2. We Love and Serve God Instead of Money and Possessions (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

We can be tempted to confuse our wants with our needs, and then pursue those things we want as though we can't live without them. If our pursuit of these things takes priority in our lives, then we have allowed them to become idols that come before God.

APPLY: Use money wisely for God's glory, avoiding an unhealthy desire for material possessions.

- *What is the proper attitude for a Christian to have about money?*
- *Should Christians invest their money in order to earn more money? Explain.*
- *In what ways can we use our money wisely for God's glory?*

EXPLORE: People are often tempted to try to "get rich quick," rather than working hard and learning to be content when their basic needs are met. Gambling is one such effort. In many cases, this leads to trouble and heartache. Research shows that a high percentage of people who win state lottery jack-pots spend all they win in a short period of time and are worse off afterward than before they won.

3. Seek God's Kingdom and His Righteousness First, for Yourself and for Others (Matthew 6:24-33)

When we have no other gods in our lives, we come to understand that the true and living God is all we need. We come to trust His providential care and we are content with His provision.

APPLY: Make the pursuit of God your highest goal, trusting Him to provide your daily needs.

- *What does it mean for us to make the pursuit of God our highest priority?*
- *Why is it so difficult for people to put God and His kingdom first, avoiding an unhealthy concern for making sure we have what we need and want?*

RESPOND:

Option 1: Take a few minutes to discuss spending patterns in our culture. What do people in our culture spend their money on? What do we spend our money on? Encourage your group members to look this week at their checkbooks, recent bank statements, or their last federal income tax return. Have them determine the major categories they spent the most money on over the last year. What does their analysis reveal about their use of money? Encourage them to make any changes needed in order to honor God with their money.

Option 2: Write on the markerboard the following quote from Jim Elliot: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.” Jim Elliot and Nate Saint were two of five young missionaries who were murdered by the pagan tribe they went to evangelize in Ecuador. Watch the brief synopsis of their story and its fruit at bit.ly/SaintStory and then discuss what it means to love and serve God instead of money and possessions. Encourage your group members to take any steps needed in order to make the pursuit of God their highest goal.

ST Unit: Modern Day Idols, Lesson 3 Teaching Outline:
“Where Does The Time Go”

Date: August 20, 2017

Study Text: 1 Peter 4:8-11; Ephesians 5:15-17; 6:5-8

Family Theme: Honoring God with Our Time

CONNECT:

Option 1: Begin this week’s session by asking the following:

- *If you wrote down what you did each hour of the day for a year, what would you discover about yourself?*
- *How does the way we spend our time and God-given gifts reflect what is really important to us?*
- *What would an observer say is really important to you based on how you spend your time?*

Option 2: Open the session by asking the following:

- *How do people in our culture spend their “discretionary time,” or time not spent working or sleeping?*
- *How do you like to spend your discretionary time?*
- *What would people say is important to you based on how you spend your time?*

Transition: *Time is a valuable commodity, but few areas of our lives present a greater challenge for us than management of our time. In this week’s lesson we will see what the Bible says about how to make the best use of the time God has given us.*

LEARN:

1. Use Time to Serve God and Others, Bringing Glory to God (1 Peter 4:8-11)

God's design is for us to use our time to serve Him through a local body of believers, making ourselves accountable to these fellow believers as we give our time to glorify God through that body.

APPLY: Make it part of your regular routine to use your gifts and abilities to serve God and others.

- *What do we learn about the use of time in the life of Jesus?*
- *How can we determine what God has gifted us to do for His glory?*

EXPLORE: First Corinthians 12-14 provides extensive discussion regarding spiritual gifts. As with Ephesians 4:7-16 and 1 Peter 4:8-11, spiritual gifts are always given for the benefit of the body and the glory of God, never for the fame of the one receiving the gift.

2. Make the Best Use of Our Time in Accordance with God's Will (Ephesians 5:15-17)

The Bible is God's explanation of His will for us. As we learn and internalize His Word, He empowers us through His Spirit to express principles of the Bible in the use of our time.

APPLY: Take advantage of opportunities to use time in accordance with God's will.

- *What are some uses of our time that are not inherently sinful, but which can become unwise if we give them too much priority?*
- *What uses of our time clearly demonstrate our desire to know and bring glory to God?*
- *How can we use our time in ways that will positively affect our children and grandchildren?*

3. Use Time to Do the Will of God Wholeheartedly (Ephesians 6:5-8)

God expects us to view all we do in the light of His will. The Bible teaches that God will hold us accountable for the way we invest each day and each moment. This includes service to earthly masters.

APPLY: Do all we do as if we are doing it for Christ.

- *How does our culture encourage people to spend more time than we should on hobbies, sports, or entertainment?*
- *How can we enjoy sports, hobbies, and entertainment in a healthy way, and not let them become higher in priority than they should be?*
- *How can churches encourage believers to wisely spend their time in pursuits that glorify God?*

RESPOND:

Option 1: Ask your group members to list opportunities to use their time to glorify God through the various ministries of your church. Without calling out those who are not yet giving time to serve through the church's ministries, ask your group members to consider how much time they are giving to the Lord's work. Are they satisfied with the amount of time they are giving to serve God? If not, what ministry opportunity could they volunteer to help with or find out more about in order to give more time to serve God? What "time waster" could they give up in order to find fulfillment through serving God? Remind your group that our motivation for serving God is appreciation for all He has done for us, and a desire to please and glorify Him by helping build and extend His kingdom on earth.

Option 2: bit.ly/TebowFoundation

Watch the video at the link above about Tim Tebow's Foundation, and then ask the following:

- *What are some similar ways Christians can give their time to help people in their communities, and around the world?*
- *What are some specific ways we could help needy people in our community?*

Discuss ways your group could glorify God by helping people in your community. This might be a good opportunity to plan a ministry project in which to serve together as a group. If so, discuss the possibilities and begin to plan for such a project. Encourage your group members to also watch for and consider ways they can serve the people of your community individually.

ST Unit: Modern Day Idols, Lesson 4 Teaching Outline:
“Totally Devoted”

Date: August 28, 2017

Study Text: James 4:1-4; Luke 14:26-27; Acts 12:20-23; Matthew 22:34-40

Family Theme: Honoring God with Our Devotion

CONNECT:

Option 1: Begin the session by asking the following:

- *What does it mean to be devoted to something or someone?*
- *What are some examples of things people in our culture are devoted to?*
- *Is it wrong to be devoted to anything other than God? Explain your answer.*

Option 2: World soccer superstar Lionel Messi is known as one of the best and most dedicated players in the world. In an interview for Time magazine in 2012, Messi was asked about his low-key lifestyle. He responded that his love for the game caused him to devote his time to it. He stated that even as a kid, he would stay home while his friends went out in the evenings, knowing he had practice the next day. He chose to stay home and make sacrifices because he was dedicated to the game. Ask the following:

- *What can we learn about dedication and devotion from Messi’s example?*
- *What might this kind of devotion to God look like in our lives?*

Transition: *Many things compete for our devotion in the culture we live in. Today we will see how we can be devoted to God above all else, and how that frees us from slavery to sin and its consequences so we can experience real joy and abundant life.*

LEARN:

1. Be Devoted to God More Than to Any Desire, Pleasure, Person, or Thing (James 4:1-4; Acts 12:20-23)

Pursuing earthly desires, pleasure, people, and the things of the world promises happiness, but we are designed for fulfillment that only comes from pursuing God with total abandon.

APPLY: Wholehearted devotion to God is the basis for wise life choices and a life of true joy.

- *What are some pleasures, people, or things that those in our culture may be devoted to?*
- *How does wholehearted devotion to God lead to joy and fulfillment?*

2. Practice Total Devotion to God and Love Others as Yourself (Matthew 22:34-40)

The commandment to love God with one's heart, soul, and mind leaves no room for any sort of separation of faith from practice for the believer. Total devotion to God is not just a spiritual matter, but it involves the whole of a person's life as he lives out his supreme and complete love for God.

APPLY: Make knowing, loving, and following God our highest priority, followed by loving others.

- *What might total devotion to God look like in a person's day-to-day life?*
- *How might a life of total devotion to God impact those around us who are not believers?*
- *How might technology and social media vie for our total devotion?*

EXPLORE: What did Christ mean when He stated that the law and the prophets depend or hang on the commands to love God supremely and to love others as ourselves? These commands summarize all of God's laws. A person who loves God supremely and loves others as much as he loves himself will be upright in all his dealings with God and with others.

3. Our Devotion to Christ Is to Be Far Greater Than Even Our Devotion to Our Family (Luke 14:26-27)

We cannot separate God's demand for our total devotion from His perfect love and absolute power. This means that His demand for our total devotion is not only right, it is good, and it is good for us. Only this laying down of our desires will lead to God's blessing and fulfillment in this life and in the life to come.

APPLY: Order our lives in a way that will help us grow in our love and devotion to Christ.

- *Does total devotion to God mean we must neglect our families? Explain.*
- *How would you describe what it looks like to be totally devoted to God, and yet love our spouses, children, family, and close friends?*
- *How can we grow in our devotion to God?*

RESPOND:

Option 1: Watch this video: bit.ly/PetDistractions, and then ask:

- *What kinds of things distract people from full devotion to God?*
- *How can we overcome distractions and give full devotion to God?*
- *What step will you take to give full devotion to God this week?*

Option 2: Ask your group to silently consider how they would answer the following questions:

- *To what do you aspire above everything else in your life?*
- *Would you say that pursuing the call of God in Christ Jesus is the one main thing you are doing (Philippians 3:13-14)? If not, what occupies that place in your life?*
- *What could you do this week to demonstrate that you want to be devoted to Christ above all else?*

Encourage your group members to determine how they will put their devotion to God into action this week.