

Theme: Christians must be vigilant to keep themselves from Idols - anything we look to in place of God, assigning it god-like powers to give us what should be sought in God alone. Idolatry is rampant in the iWorld, and is concentrated in and perpetuated by technology.

I. Intro – Hindu Gods All Over India

- A. I went to India for missions work in 2004
- B. Little statues of gods in a lot of places
- C. Glad we don't live in a land full of idols - or do we?
- D. What is idolatry? Why is it dangerous?

II. The Danger of Idolatry

- A. We are commanded to keep ourselves from idols
Dear children, **keep yourselves from idols.** 1 John 5:21

Therefore, my dear friends, **flee from idolatry.** 1 Corinthians 10:14

You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴ **You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything** in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. Exodus 20:3–4
 - 1. John commands us to be on our guard against idols
 - 2. Paul also gives this command; part of Ten Commandments
 - 3. We have to be on our guard because idolatry has been a snare to God's people
- B. A perpetual temptation because we are prone to idolatry
 - 1. The human mind is, so to speak, a perpetual forge of idols - John Calvin, *Institutes*, I:XI:8

- 2. Since the fall, we are given to idolatry
- 3. But is this really a problem today?
- 4. We don't actually have idols - do we?

III. Understanding Idolatry

- A. Idolatry includes little gods made of wood and stone
The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm... ¹³ The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in the form of man, of man in all his glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. Isaiah 44:12–13
 - 1. An idol - metal/wood statue, shape of created thing
 - 2. The common form of idols in the ancient world
- B. Idols can take other forms however
Dear children, **keep yourselves from idols.** 1 John 5:21
 - 1. John is probably not thinking of statue idols
 - a. Nothing in the rest of the letter about these
 - b. Quite likely the idolatry in mind is the ideas of the false teachers - which taught a false god
 - c. Plato & others spoke of idols in a figurative sense
 - 2. Paul speaks of idols in a figurative sense
Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and **greed, which is idolatry.** Colossians 3:5

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or **greedy person — such a man is an idolater** — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Ephesians 5:5

C. Defining idolatry

1. Idols - anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give...An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, "If I have that, then I'll feel my life has meaning, then I'll know I have value, then I'll feel significant and secure." - Tim Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*
2. An idol is anything we look to in place of God, assigning it god-like powers to give us what should be sought in God alone.
Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. Psalms 20:7
3. When we understand this, we know anything can be an idol, and everything has probably been an idol to someone at some time.

D. The effects of idolatry

1. Idols shape us into their own image - we become like what we worship
They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the Lord had ordered them, "Do not do as they do," and they did the things the Lord had forbidden them to do. 2 Kings 17:15
2. We are betrayed and consumed by the things in which we trusted
But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. **Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors, ¹⁴ the roar of battle will rise against your people, so that all your fortresses will be devastated...** Hosea 10:13-14

IV. Idolatry In the iWorld

- A. Caveat - my background and love of technology
 1. I will be severely critiquing technology
 2. I am not anti-technology!
 3. I was a computer programmer, and love technology
 4. But I see its downsides as well as its upsides
- B. Technology is an idol in the iWorld - and it enables our other idols
 1. People will stand in line for hours, spend huge sums of money on the latest gadget, car, or TV
 2. Many believe that the latest technology will give them status and meaning - an idol
 3. We look to technology - not God - to solve problems - which were often caused by technology!
If the problem is that too much technology has made us busy and anxious, the solution will be another technology that will organize, amuse, and relax us. So, although historically robots provoked anxieties about technology out of control, these days they are more likely to represent the reassuring idea that in a world of problems, science will offer solutions. - Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together*, 11
 4. We fear we can not live without our technology
 - a. New problem with smart phones - nomophobia
 - b. Recent survey - 54% worry about being out of mobile phone contact - women 17% more likely than men (Daily Mail UK article)
 - c. We are addicted to our new idols

5. Technology also enables our other idols
 - a. Addiction to sex or sports - unending access
 - b. Addiction to greed - unending shopping at home
 - c. Addiction to power - always connected to work
- C. Our technological tools are reshaping us in their image - we become like them
1. All tools shape those who use them - it is never a one way street
 - a. They change our habits
 1. Central heat and New England winters
 2. Smartphones, computers, internet also change our habits
 3. We now have to plan to maintain important habits
 - b. They change our expectations
 1. We now expect things instantaneously
 2. We now expect to always be connected
 - c. They can actually rewire our brains
 1. Brain rewiring for 'multitasking' - partial attention to many things/people
 2. Our brains begin to crave this, and struggle to focus
- D. Our modern idols
1. We look to them for meaning, status, and salvation
 2. We crave them, serve them, & are shaped by them
 3. They change the way we think & act - emotionally

and physically

4. They enable to love and feed our other idols as well

V. Applying the Word

- A. What are the idols that I worship and serve?
1. We all have our own idols - don't be deceived
 2. What do I look to for meaning, fulfillment?
 3. What is the thing I panic if I am without it?
 4. Where do I really place my trust?
 5. What is shaping me, changing my thoughts and habits?
 6. The first step is identifying the idols!
- B. The Lord's Supper - keeping ourselves from idols
1. Amidst the call of idols, God calls us to His Table
 2. Here we come to find true meaning and fulfillment
 3. Here we receive from God rather than giving to idols
 4. Here we place our trust in God, giving Him our idols
 5. Come and receive freedom from idols that enslave

Idolatry In the iWorld

1 John 5:21
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 Communion
 Revelation 1:4-6

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne,⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.
Revelation 1:4–6

Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. 1 John 5:21