

iDols

identifying idols

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1) Begin with prayer. Below are examples of prayers appropriate for personal study time and small group use. Your small group may want to consider using Living Room Liturgy by Winfield Bevins, Seedbed Publishing 2020.

Personal prayer- Father God, help me to know the wonderful things you have freely given me through your Son, Jesus Christ. I listen now for his voice as I look to the Scriptures and study. Jesus grant me a spirit of wisdom and revelation so that I will serve and love well. Holy Spirit, teach me and help me to live by faith that I may bring all glory to God. Thank you for teaching me to do what is good and leading me in the way I should go. May your Word be a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. Amen.

Small group prayer- Dear Lord, you created us for relationship and community. The earliest Christians devoted themselves to the breaking of bread and prayer, to the apostles' teaching and reflection on your word, they ate together with glad and sincere hearts, and served those who were in need. We thank you for the gift of this small group fellowship. May we grow together by following their examples of mutual prayer, support, and encouragement. Unite us together in the bonds of this fellowship and use our small group as a means of grace that we may draw closer to you. Amen.

2) Watch/ listen to the sermon again prior to your study or meeting.

3) Read the suggested text in preparation for the meeting. Consider reading in several different Bible versions (suggestion- use <https://www.biblegateway.com> to access other versions). Are there nuances that help you to see different things in the text?

4) Consider reading the suggested text aloud at your small group meeting.

5) Important questions to consider: What is the context of this scripture? What was happening at the time in which the scripture was written? How does this passage relate to our world now?

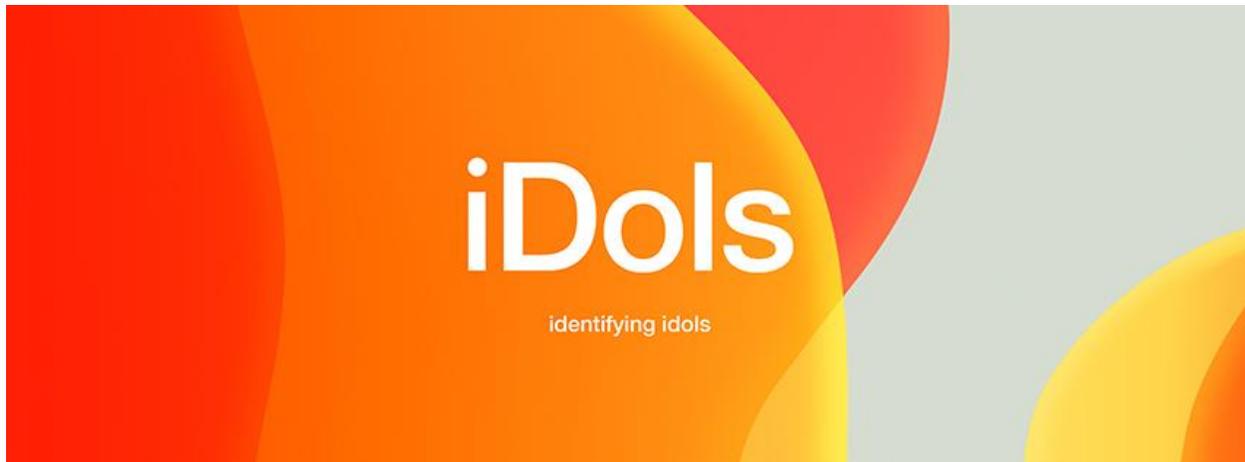
6) Utilize your Bible Study Notes if you have a study Bible. Compare notes from different group members Bible versions. Some may be very text specific; others may provide good cross references and others may be more application oriented.

7) Consult a biblical commentary or trusted website for additional insight or guidance if you desire a more in-depth understanding or if you are unsure.

8) Encourage everyone to participate and be respectful of your group members. Try not to dominate the conversation.

9) Practice confidentiality. Never share personal thoughts or struggles of other group members.

10) End your personal study or small group time with a prayer thanking God for what has been learned and close with the Lord's Prayer.



Week 1

Text: Genesis 1:26–31

Topic(s): Image Bearer, Idols, Relationship

Big Idea of the Message: Being created in the image of God means we naturally seek to worship and reflect the image of the one we worship.

Application Point: We can be conformed back into the image of God daily when we focus all our worship on him.

Bible Study Questions:

1. When God made man “in His own image” what exactly do you think that means? What do you think the Israelites think God meant in view of their past use of idols for worship?
2. How did God intend man to interact with His creations?
3. How might the Israelites have interpreted Gods words about man about using things in the creation as “idols”?
4. Is the image we bear as His people an image of God or one of our own interpretations?

Discussion Questions:

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from this week’s message?
2. What are some reasons we naturally want to bear an image?
3. What are some images we try to bear as people?
4. How can we be more conscious about which image we bear?
5. How can Christ transform us back into his image?
6. How can we pray for you?



Week 2

Text: Matthew 7:21–23

Topic(s): Politics, Idolatry, Gospel

Big Idea of the Message: Some American Christians mistake being in a particular political party for being Christian. When this happens, politics becomes an unintentional idol in our life that has harmful consequences.

Application Point: Our allegiance to the Kingdom of God should exceed our loyalty to any nation or political party.

Bible Study Questions:

1. Does this passage advocate a position where we are truly living the Christian life or is it based on how we see ourselves or how others see us?
2. Is it our actions or our words that determine how God sees us or will we be told He doesn't recognize us on Judgment Day?
3. Do idols like politics or patriotism or culture keep us from realizing our Christianity? Are these factors idols for some? Explain

Discussion Questions:

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from this week's message?
2. What are some cautions one can heed to make sure a nation or political party don't become an idol?
3. How can we relate to others who disagree with us politically?
4. What are some ways the gospel is hindered when we overemphasize our political or national affiliation?
5. What hope can Christ bring that patriotism cannot?
6. How can we pray for you?



Week 3

Text: Acts 10:1–48; James 2:1–10

Topic(s): Partiality, Prejudice, Preconceived Ideas

Big Idea of the Message: Too often the church has allowed prejudice to cause harm to those God loves. Because of this, God’s correction and then our repentance is needed.

Application Point: We must avoid idolizing our own group. We show the love of God for all races, cultures, and classes by repenting of the sins of our group and refusing to show partiality.

Bible Study Questions:

1. In Acts 10, Peter is instructed by God to no longer treat faithful Gentiles as outsiders and therefore “unclean”. He is given examples of why this is in the passage. Discuss Cornelius as an example of a faithful believer in God.
2. How was Peter persuaded to treat Cornelius as a fellow believer?
3. In vs 39-43 how did Peter persuade the Jews to no longer treat the Gentiles as nonbelievers? How difficult was this, do you think to convince the Jews that there should be this seismic shift in their beliefs about who should receive God’s covenant promises?
4. Could you consider the Jews’ belief system as idolatry? Why or why not?
5. In the James passage Paul asks if favoritism for some over others is in concert with God’s will? Discuss Paul’s argument that this is a form of discrimination. Do these arguments apply today?

Discussion Questions

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from this week’s message?
2. What are some harmful actions done by the church historically—and maybe even in your community—that you need to repent of? What actions can be taken to demonstrate repentance?
3. How might God be convicting you of the sin of partiality in your life?
4. What are some ways we can be more open to how God is trying to change our thinking? How can we adapt our thinking to God’s thinking?
5. Are we willing to be corrected by God? By brothers and sisters in Christ? Are we willing to be corrected by other cultures, races, or classes?
6. How can we pray for you?



Week 5

Text: Romans 1:18-25 Romans 5:6-11

Topic(s): Recognition of idol chasing in our society, Availability of transformation and reformation through the love of Jesus Christ

Core Value(s): Salvation and forgiveness

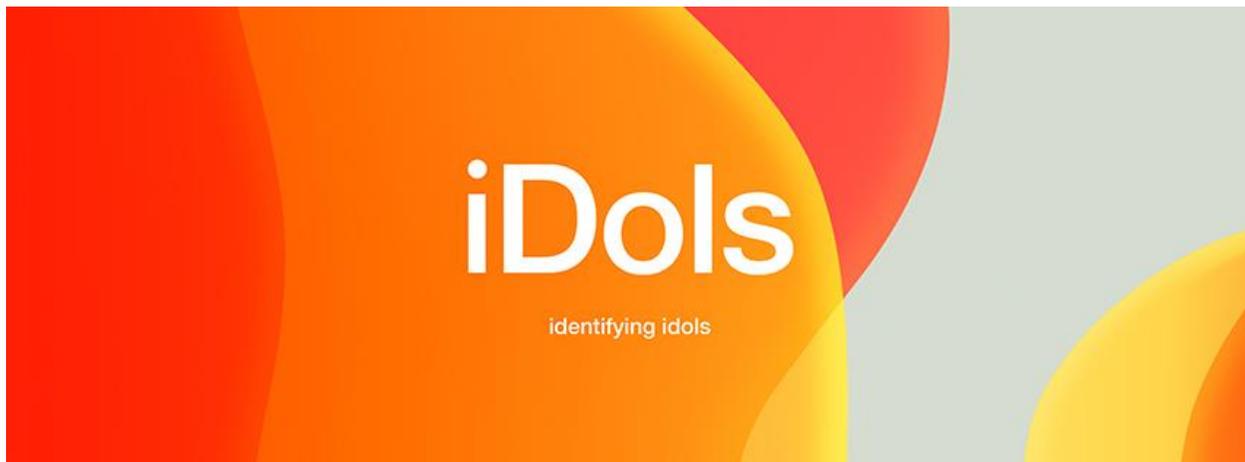
Main Idea: We must recognize the need for transformation through the grace available to all believers through Jesus Christ

Bible Study Questions:

1. Who is Paul pointing at in this passage? Name some instances of unfaithfulness in the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Did any of these involve idol worship? What was the outcome?
2. How does Paul describe those who knew what was right in worshipping God and chose not to do it?
3. What is the answer described in Romans 5 6-11 for the behavior described in the previous passage?
4. How is a believer reassured of the forgiveness of his/her idolatrous ways?

Discussion Questions:

1. How do we sometimes allow worldly wisdom or compromise of essential doctrines of the Church enter into our discussions today?
2. Bible infallibility is constantly questioned in our society. Has this questioning caused you to question your beliefs about what the Bible says?
3. Do we find our beliefs slowly fading as our culture questions the veracity of our beliefs?
4. Discuss the Casting Crowns song "Slow Fade". Does this speak to you?
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QASREBVDsLk>
5. What is one thing that stood out to you from this week's message?
6. How can we pray for you?



Week 4

Text: Romans 12:1-18

Topic(s): Cultural Idolatry, Subtle Idolatry, Doctrine

Big Idea of the Message: When we become infatuated with what the world thinks of us, it can lead to committing cultural idolatry by neglecting the fundamental doctrines of a biblical faith.

Application Point: God's truth will always supersede cultural truth.

Bible Study Questions:

1. Paul says God expects us to see our bodies as living sacrifices to Him. How has this been twisted by present day people to see body image as the object of worship and not God?
2. A revolutionary way of thinking is introduced to the early church: conforming to the word of God and not to the world and its local customs and traditions. How much of this was a problem do you think for the people of the Way?
3. What does Paul say about gifts, talents and hypocrisy? How do the factors he discusses in this passage apply to a people steeped in the Laws of Moses? How hard was it for the Christian to live this way back then? Now?

Discussion Questions:

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from this week's message?
2. How can we love culture and the people in it while not losing hold of the truth?
3. What are some indicators that doctrine is being replaced for cultural appropriation?
4. How can we reach our culture with the gospel?
5. In what ways can culture become an idol?
6. How can we pray for you?