

WHEN "THINGS" TAKE OVER

Exodus 20:4-5

Introduction: God gave several commandments and among them is one that helps identify and strip away those things which could create competition with our worshipping only Him.

The first commandment describes our ultimate distinction and the second commandment outlines sort of a roadmap. For instance, plan a trip from here to somewhere far away. We drive in one direction for 5 to 600 miles, then turn right or left and go for another 1,000 miles, using a roadmap to figure our stops, etc., avoiding detours, etc. So it is with the Christian's journey with God. Worship of God is our destination and the Bible is our map.

I. MANKIND DOESN'T THINK GOD IS NEEDED

1. **Romans 1:22-23** - People think that they are wise and don't need any advise or guidance from God but look at all that people worship instead of God.
 - Instead of worshipping the Creator, mankind worships the created, the creature, the imaginations of his/her mind.
2. What is idolatry? Physical images (things) make up most idolatry.
 - God's Word doesn't exactly do away with objects affiliated with worship, such as the Ark of the Covenant, the tabernacle, the temple, etc.
 - However, when people elevate objects up to the level of God or drags God down to the level of the object, that is idolatry.
3. Images can be helpful in worship of God.
 - Images of the disciples, of Mary, of Jesus, of the Bible, of the Cross, of a Dove, the sign of a fish, a place/house of worship.
 - Images can be reminders of God, but they can never take the place of God, therefore do not "deify" them. Then they become idols.

II. THERE ARE IDOLS IN THE CHURCH

1. Are there idols in today's Church.
 - The Bible, the Cross, Doctrinal Creeds, the Church Building, the Pastor, etc.
2. How do "normal" things become idols?
 - Things people are more comfortable with, know more about.
 - Things that stand for what people already believe.
 - Things that agree with what people want and disagree with what people don't want.
 - Things that will "listen" to people's advice.
3. It is possible to become so infatuated with an object, a picture, a symbol of someone or something so loved that one becomes unaware when anything, anyone else is even near.
 - Remember, God had to destroy the Temple in Jerusalem for in the minds of the people, it had taken God's place.

III. THINGS ASSOCIATED WITH WORSHIP CAN BECOME IDOLS

1. Have you ever become uncomfortable when visiting other places of worship and their form of worship was different from your normal form of worship?
 - We become bonded to one particular method, style and not to God. It is the form, the method that we actually are "in tune with" and not with God.
2. Take two men standing on a train track and a train is approaching. A bystander rushes over and pushes the two men out of the way. When the train passes, one of the two men falls to his knees in silent prayer and thankfulness. The other jumps and shouts with joy that the train missed him. Both were saved, which was more thankful?
3. Leaders can become idols.
 - A pastor or teacher can come to mean so much to a person that no one else can teach or pastor like that particular one, and no one else but that one can hold your attention or please you. That pastor or teacher has become an idol.
4. Spiritual experiences can become idolatry.
 - Many have experienced a wonderful touch of God in their lives - years ago, but they are still living that particular moment and nothing or anyone else has been able to be received since that time.
 - Worshipping an experience that happened years ago is idolatry.
5. Churches can become idols.
 - Some have spent many happy years in a particular church and then moved to another place.
 - Somehow things just are not the same, and a church like the one left has just not been found yet. That church of many years has become an idol to those who can't be happy in worship anywhere else.

CONCLUSION:

1. We can give the right kind of worship to the wrong Gods.
2. God is jealous and doesn't want anything to get between Him and us. He wants direct contact, no competition, no interference.
3. What is idolatry? Simply put it is our effort to "tame" God, twist Him into our mold, expecting Him to rearrange His life to fit what we want.
4. Aren't we supposed to rearrange our lives to fit around God?
5. Take a good look at your life. Is there some form of idolatry there that you've not been aware of?