

IDOLS OF THE HEART



AUGUST 2020

Day 1

What is the definition of an idol?

When does something become an idol in your life?

Take a minute and list all the things that can be idols?

Food, relationships, money, sports, music, career, power, security, social status, social media and the list goes on of the things that can be an idol. Idols are simply things that have taken place of God and you spend more time with them than you with God. You look to them instead of God. This month is going to be a study that will challenge you to look at the idols of your heart. Ask God to prepare you heart to study and learn from his word this month.

Read Matthew 6:19-24

Idols in our lives are usually temporal things that don't last. What does Jesus say in verses 19-20 about these idols in our lives?

Verse 21 is the key verse to this section. Why? What is Jesus point in saying this to the people?

What are some indications that somebody's heart is worshipping an idol and not God?

Look at verses 22-23. What condition is an idol worshipper in whether they want to admit it or not?

What does Jesus say about the person who says they can worship an idol and God as the same time? How is he right in what he is saying?

What is a potential idol or idols that you have in your life now that you are "worshipping" more than God?

PRAYER – Ask God to reveal to you the idols of your heart.

Day 2

What are several of the idols that leaders in the church are worship?

What is hard about dealing with a leader in the church who is worshipping an idol? How do you go about confronting them with their sin?

Nobody is immune to worshipping idols: leaders, pastors, students. We are created to worship and in our struggle with the flesh and sin, we can find ourselves worshipping things other than God. For leaders in the church they can be power, status, church budget, reputation, a ministry itself, relationships with people in the church and the list can go on. That is why everybody needs to think about the idols of their own heart and deal with them, or they can impact the ministry of a leaders in the church. Ask God to encourage and teach you as you read his word today.

Read Ezekiel 14:1-6

What group was Ezekiel dealing with who were worshipping idols?

What idols were they worshipping?

What did God reveal to Ezekiel about the Israelites?

How did God respond to the Israelites?

How does God address himself in verses 4 and 6? Why does He use this title or phrase? What does it mean for the people?

This was God's chosen people whom God did amazing things in their lives. Yet, they were worshipping idols and not the living God. They were trying to worship God and man. They thought it was okay to serve two masters. They had another thing coming.

How would an idol worshipper show they were truly repentant of their idol?

Think of the idol you struggle with in your life. How can you show that you are truly repentant of worshipping that idol? What changes can you make to deal with that idol?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you to worship Him above all things.

Day 3

What do you think about people who worshipped Golden Calves, wooden poles, the sun, etc.?

Why do we often think those people are silly for their idol worship?

How are you just like them at times in your life? Do you think you are silly or foolish? Why or why not?

We are quick to judge people for bowing down to a calf, pole, snake or some other creature. We think they are crazy, out of their mind. Yet when we worship money, relationships, a sport star or musician, we think we are normal, and that people should not judge us. Ask God to help you read and understand his truths today and for help to apply them to your life.

Read Exodus 20:1-4

What do we call the section we find our reading in today?

Why do you think God prefaced the 10 commandments with what he says in verses 1 and 2?

What incredible things did God do in the lives of the Israelites up to that point?

What incredible things has God done in your life? List 3 or 4 things.

What two commandments are we given in these verses?

How does the second commandment relate to the first commandment?

What do we specifically learn about idols in verse 4?

How could verse 2 help you in your daily struggle against idols?

PRAYER – For help in your struggle with idols. Confess your idols specifically.

Day 4

When you worship God, what do you hope to get out of your worship experience?

List 3 idols people worship today. Next to each one write down what people hope to get out of worshipping that idol?

1.

2.

3.

It is easy to slip into a pattern of idol worship as Christians. If you watch tv, listen to music, go to the movies, watch sports games you are bombarded with pictures of what you really, really need in your life to be a normal human being. So we end up craving more of things we already have and covet the things we do not have. It is a temptation we all deal with in our lives, Christian and non-Christian. Ask God to give you a desire to dig into his word and study it today.

Read Romans 1:18-25

Who is to be the object of all worship?

According to these verses why should God be the object of our worship? (List all the things Paul mentions in this section.)

What are words and phrases Paul uses to describe the idol worshipper?

According to verse 24, what is one of the worst things God can do to those who worship at the feet of idols?

What might it look like to be given over to our sin?

What is reemphasized in verse 25 to show what idol worshippers are doing?

What are reasons you can think of to worship God and no one or nothing else?

Who is an idol worshipper you can encourage with these truths from Romans?
What can you say to them?

PRAYER – Pray for the person you just listed above.

Day 5

Think of someone who is struggling with an idol. How would you describe that person's personality, focus of their life, relationships, spiritual life, etc.?

What is the bad news you could share with them regarding their idol worship? Why are we often so hesitant to share that bad news with them?

Idol worship leads to spiritual destruction. If a person does not repent and turn away from the idol, they will turn eternity separated from God. This is an unpopular truth because it means they are wrong, and they need to change. Nobody likes that. Yet if we love and care for someone then we need to share these hard truths with them. Why? We want to see them repent and change. Ask God to convince you of his truths as you study the Bible today.

Read Romans 3:10-18

How are "idol worshippers" described in these verses?

What is the bad news for them?

Why are these important verses for us to remember as Christians? What does it remind us about our own lives, past and present?

What do we see about our own salvation in these verses? How did we come to faith in God and give up our “idols”?

What is the good news that we are all given in verses 21 to 24?

What is the key to receiving this good news? Who has to share it with us? Who has to help us see the truth?

What does this show us about our own power and strength as men? How is this humbling to you?

PRAYER – Ask God to give us boldness in sharing our faith and resisting idols.

Day 6

What is a promise that somebody made that you doubted whether they would be able to follow through on? Why did you doubt them? How did you take matters into your own hands to make sure they followed through? How did it turn out?

What are promises of God that you struggle with in trusting that they are true? Why do you struggle with them?

We struggle if God is really with us during physical pain, sin struggles, rocky relationships. In those same situations we might struggle with God's promises that he loves us, guides us and knows what is happening in our lives. God should keep me free from pain and suffering right? Why doesn't he? There are a lot of questions we have during our struggles. Ask God to teach you and grow you in your faith as you study the Bible today.

Read Genesis 12:1-3

Yesterday we saw in Romans that as man we can only sin on our own. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot choose God. We cannot do anything good. We need God to change our lives and work in us. What was special about Abram that God chose him out of all the people's in the world?

What promise did God make to Abram?

Humanly speaking, how would this promise be hard for Abram to believe?

We have the advantage of reading this story, knowing the ending. Abram did not have that luxury. How does the thought of this promise start to lead Abram into a struggle with idolatry? (Think about Hagar and Ishmael)

The promise itself became an idol for Abram and Sarah. They did not trust the Lord and tried to take things into their own hands. We are in good company for all the times we try to take matters into our own hands. When you think of the promise that God made to Abram, what was awesome when you think of some of the dumb things he would do later?

What do you do when you struggle with God's promises? How do you trust the Lord? How do you try to work things out yourself?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you to trust his promises.

Day 7

What are some good things in our lives that can become idols?

What makes a good thing become an idol?

How can the following good things become idols?

1. The Bible –
2. Feeling safe and secure –
3. The church –

Ask God for a clear mind to understand his word and the wisdom to know how to apply it to your every day life.

Read Genesis 12:10-20

What was Abraham's idol in this passage?

What did Abraham want Sarai to do? Why?

How does his action expose the idol in his heart?

What was the result of Abraham's actions?

As you see this idol of safety and security in Abraham's life affected the people around him. He passed off his wife as his sister and let her go be with Pharaoh. The Egyptian people were struck with a plague. All this happened because of Abraham's idol. Our idol worship doesn't just impact us, but it will impact the people that are around us. Write down an idol or potential idol that you can see in your life. It is probably something you wrote down above or on an earlier day.

List the ways having that idol will impact you negatively.

List the ways having that idol will impact the people around you negatively.

How should answering the last two questions motivate you to take care of that idol?

PRAYER – Pray about that idol or potential idol in your life.

Day 8

Why is worshipping idols (not just statues but sports, music, people, etc.) so easy to do?

Why is it easier to worship idols rather than worship God?

What are things about God that you have a hard time understanding because you can't see him, touch him or have a conversation with him like you can any other person?

We cannot see God and so we often do not spend time reading or praying because we can see our book, computer, friends, sports equipment, piano, etc. It is so much easier to spend time doing those things because we get immediate gratification. It is harder to spend time with God because we can't see him or talk to him like we do with other people. We have a hard time believing and trusting in the promises God gives us regarding eternal life and heaven because we cannot see it or touch it. We only have a promise. Can we trust the promise? How do we know it is true? We are not alone in those struggles as we will see in the case of Abraham. Ask God to encourage you in your faith as you read His word today.

Read Genesis 15:1-6

What was God's promise to Abraham?

Why did he have a hard time believing God's promise?

Through Abraham's question in verse 2, what do we learn about God's timing?

What did God do to show Abraham he was serious about his promise?

After looking at the stars in the sky, what does Abraham do? What does God count that as for Abraham? How does this show us what faith really is?

Seriously, all Abraham had to do was see the stars in the sky and then he believed God's promise? That is exactly what happened. He believed without seeing a single child born to him and Sarah. He believed God's promise. He didn't need any further proof. Abraham believed!

When have you needed to wait for God's timing? Was it hard or easy to wait? Explain your answer.

PRAYER – Ask God to help you to wait on him, to trust him and his promises.

Day 9

What is one of the promises of God from the Bible that you have a hard time trusting or believing. Why do you have a hard time trusting or believing that promise?

What is one of the promises of God that you have an easy time trusting? Why do you have an easy time trusting that promise?

Ask God to help you read, think about and put into practice his word today.

Read Genesis 16:1-5

What good thing was an idol to Sarai?

Why was it hard for her to see and believe God's promise to Abram?

How did she show that she did not trust the Lord but had to do things herself?

How did she drag Abram into her idol worship?

How did Abram fail as the head of the home? What should he have done?

This “great” plan that Sarai hatched with Abram, how did it backfire on them?
What were the results of their actions?

How can you see yourself in this story when you think of your life and the situations you have faced?

What are things you need to do to make sure you don't make a rash decision like Sarai and Abram did in their situation? (Think carefully about this one)

PRAYER – Help in trusting God's promises and to not try to make things happen on your own.

Day 10

What is something you have seen happen that you thought would be impossible?
Why did you think that it was impossible for that to ever happen?

What are things that contribute to people thinking certain things are impossible?
List as many things as you can think of.

There was a time when people thought it would be impossible for man to fly. Then it was impossible that man would ever go to the stars. For some it was impossible that we would ever have an African American president. The list can go on and on of things that people once thought impossible that became possible. Of course if you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior than you serve the God that can make anything possible. There is nothing He cannot do. Ask God to remind you of his truths and promises as you study his word today.

Read Genesis 17:15-22

What are some of the emotions that Abraham showed during his conversation with God?

What does this show us about Abraham's character and beliefs about God?

Even after all that has happened, Abraham who was considered righteous, did he have doubts? How do you know?

How do we know that God's plan at this point was not something general but very specific?

What does God say about Ishmael, the child Abraham fathered because he had a moment of not trusting God's promise?

How do we know all those promises God made to Abraham about a son, and all his descendants, was a promise that was genuine and true?

What is something you are having a hard time trusting God with right now? Why is it hard to trust God?

PRAYER – Pray about the situation you just wrote about

Day 11

What is something in your life, that if asked by God to give up completely, you would have a difficult time giving it up? Why? What would you be saying to God about your relationship with him?

Make a list of the things that you treasure in your life – think of people, possessions, etc. Now circle the things on that list that you would have a hard time giving up if need be. Now you have a list of things to pray that would not become idols in your life.

Pray that God would help you continue to deal with the idols in your life.

Read Genesis 22:1-19

What do you think was going through Abraham's mind as he dealt with the thought, he was going to sacrifice Isaac? What might have been some of his questions?

How could Isaac have become an idol to Abraham?

How does Abraham demonstrate that Isaac was not an idol?

Pick a few things from the passage that show Abraham trusted the Lord and that Isaac would be okay?

How does God provide for Abraham and Isaac?

How is this story a great illustration foreshadowing the sacrifice of Christ?

What is the biggest thing you have learned about idolatry in the life of Abraham?

PRAYER – Pray through the list you made in the beginning of the devotion.

Day 12

What is a valued possession that you traded away because something better came along? Why did you really want the new item?

What are some spiritual truths people trade away because they want something better? How do they regret their actions later?

Our youth group once did a bigger and better scavenger hunt. Every group started out with a penny. The idea was to find a house and trade the penny for something bigger and better. We had some big things that we ended up with. We had big stuffed animals, a broken freezer, a couch with paint on it among other junk. One man's junk is another man's treasure. We are quick to trade away something valuable for something that seems better at the time. Often to our regret later. Ask God to teach you some important truths as you read this account of Jacob and Esau.

Read Genesis 25: 27-34

How did Jacob feel about his brother?

How valuable was Esau's birthright to him?

Why do you think Jacob acted the way he did towards his brother?

What was Esau's idol?

What was Jacob's idol?

The promise that God made to Abraham and Isaac would be realized through Jacob and not Esau. Jacob, like his grandfather Abraham, knowing God's promises, did not fully trust that promise and took things into his own hands. How do we see that Jacob had trouble fully trusting God's promise?

Who are some Christians you know that are trading God's truths for fleshly desires? How can you help and encourage them?

What idol are you struggling with today?

PRAYER – Pray for your friends and their struggles and your idol struggle.

Day 13

What was something that you wanted that you tricked or manipulated someone to get it? Why did you want it so bad?

Why do people feel the need to get what they want through deception and trickery?

I played a game in high school where you got the name of someone in the school. Outside of school you needed to kill them by putting a sticker on them without them seeing you coming. It became a big game of deception and manipulation all so you could get the prize at the end. Today we look at a story of trickery and deception. Ask God to grow you in your faith as you read from the Bible today.

Read Genesis 27

What did Jacob and Esau both want from their father?

What did Esau do to get the blessing?

How did Isaac not trust God's promise that Jacob was to get the blessing? Why did he not trust God's promise?

What did Jacob do to get the blessing?

What price did Jacob pay for his actions in verses 41-46?

What did Jacob's action reveal about his heart?

What do you think were some of the factors that contributed to Jacob not trusting God and His promise to him? (Think about people and customs in your answer.)

What are some of the factors in your life that "encourage" you towards worshipping idols? How can you deal with them?

PRAYER – Pray about those factors you just listed.

Day 14

Besides God, what are things people fill their lives with?

Why do Christians not think about the dangers in their idol worship?

Many people treat their idols as little pets. They don't see them as dangerous but something small that they can tame. It is like taking a baby tiger as a pet. As a baby it is cute and seemingly tame and able to be controlled. But as it gets bigger it gets stronger and more aggressive. It cannot be tamed. That is our idols. That is our sin. We need to think about the dangers of idol worship. Take it seriously now, not later when it has mastery over us. Ask God to teach you about the idols in your own life as you read the Bible today.

Read Genesis 29:1-14

What was Jacob hoping to find on his journey?

What was his reaction when he came across Rachel?

How do you see God at work in putting these two people together?

How does Laban react at the arrival of Jacob? Why is he so excited?

In what ways do you think Jacob started to idolize Rachel?

Who is a person in your life that you sort of idolize? Think beyond an idol of worship but of a person you spend most of your time talking to, texting, spending time with, more than you do God. Why is it about that person that you idolize?

What steps can you take to either not idolize that person anymore or keep you from idolizing them?

PRAYER – For that person you idolize, to honor God in that relationship.

Day 15

What is something you worked hard for, thought you deserved, and did not get? Why did you not get it? How did you feel?

What are things people feel that they deserve? List 5 to 10 things.

What things do people often do when they don't get what they feel they deserve?

Anger. Frustration. Manipulation. Sense of entitlement. These are all things we think and feel when we don't get what we deserve. We deserve the house, vacation, raise in our job, part in the play, good grades. It is ours. Yet many times we don't get those things. We work hard for them and they pass us by. Ask God to think about those things in your life as you read the Bible today.

Read Genesis 29:14-30

What was most valuable to Jacob throughout these verses?

How does Jacob sort of get a taste of his own medicine in this story?

Why did Laban feel the need to trick Jacob?

What idol did Jacob struggle with? Why do you think he struggled with this?

What about Rachel made her so appealing to Jacob?

What lessons do you think God was teaching Jacob through this experience?

What lessons do you learn for your own life from Jacob's experience?

PRAYER – Pray God would help you to be content in your life.

Day 16

Who is somebody that you wished loved you as much as you loved them? Why didn't they love or care for you the same way you did for them?

What kinds of things does this make you question about yourself, your personality, who you are, when someone does not love you like you love them?

When it comes to dating, at least in the traditional sense, the guy's heart and reputation was on the line when it came to telling a girl he liked them and wanted to date them. The power is now in the girl's hands to either make you the luckiest guy in the world, or crush your heart and soul with four words, "Let's just be friends." I have been on both sides of that. The hardest heart crushing experiences were the ones where you felt there was a connection only to be rejected. You start to question your personality, or your inability to be able to see that she really did not like you. Those are hard experiences. Yet they grow you as a human being in the long run. Today we look at Rachel's oldest sister and the rejection she felt at the hands of Jacob. Ask God to help you see her hurt and pain and to think about how to apply this story to your own life.

Read Genesis 29:31-35

Leah felt hated. Why do you think Leah felt hated when it came to her husband and her sister, Rachel?

Leah wanted children. Why do you think she wanted children so badly given her situation?

What were the names of Leah's four children? Write next to each name what it meant?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Think about the names she gave to her children. What do these names show you about Leah and about her relationship with God?

What is a difficult relationship you have had? How did God help you deal with that relationship?

PRAYER – Pray for those disappointing relationships – give them to God.

Day 17

Who is a great person you know that has dealt with a lot of hard things in their life? What kinds of things have they dealt with? What do you wish you could do for them?

What has kept you from helping them?

I was watching the show *Undercover Boss* recently. That is a show where the boss goes undercover in a disguise and works among the people in his business, it is usually a business that has multiple locations. They get to see the inner workings of their business but better than that they get to know the stories of some of the people who work in their company. There was one episode where the boss met a woman who was a hostess in one of his stores. Her sister had died, and she was caring for her own children as well as her sister's children. She did not make enough money at her 50 hour a week job and so she also cleaned houses and drove an UBER car on the side. She worked 100-hour weeks just to make ends meet. It meant she never spent quality time with her family and was constantly tired. The boss gave her a big raise and gave her a good amount of money to take care of her family. It was a good gesture. Ask God to help you think about how you help people in need as you read this story from the book of Kings.

Read 2 Kings 5:1-6

What important things do we learn about Naaman in verse 1?

Why is it important to mention that God gave Naaman the victory in verse 1?

How does the slave girl ignore her own hard situation to help Naaman? What is incredible about her action?

Who else tries to help Naaman in his leprous condition? How?

What are ways God has helped you in unexpected ways?

List 3 people going through hard times and how you can pray for them.

1.

2.

3.

PRAYER – Pray for those 3 people.

Day 18

What is something you really needed and wanted from somebody and they weren't able to help you out? How did that make you feel? What did you do?

What goes through your heart and mind when you know you need something, and someone can help you, but they choose not to.

I think of the classic scene in movies where you have someone poor, whether a child or an adult, and they are in a street marketplace. There is food all around them and it is clear that they are starving. The people who man the food stands will not give them what they need most because they are more concerned about making money. It is a powerless position to be in. May God remind us of the ways in which he has provided for us so that when we see others in need, we may help them too. Ask God to encourage you as you read his word.

Read 2 Kings 5:7-10

How did the king react to Naaman's request? Why do you think he reacted that way?

What did Elisha say and do?

What was Elisha saying in verse 8 about himself and about God?

Naaman goes to Elisha. What do you think he expected Elisha to do for him?

How do you think Elisha's request came across to Naaman?

How do you think Naaman's own healing was an idol to him?

How can expectations of God lead to idolatry? Do you have any expectations that are leading you down the road to idolatry?

PRAYER – Ask God to guard your heart and help you to trust in His plan.

Day 19

Who is someone you got angry with because they gave you advice you did not want to hear? What was the advice?

Why do we sometimes need to hear advice that we don't view as favorable?

The 2 Timothy 4:3 verse is the best verse on wanting to get only advice that you WANT to hear. We can surround ourselves with all kinds "yes" men. Those are people who will always tell us what we are doing is great, to keep going and you are the best. We see this in friendships, politicians, pastors, etc. We like to hear that we are on the right course and doing the right thing. None of us likes to hear that we did something wrong or that we must change a direction in a project or something we want in our life. We get angry when people say we need to change. This is what we are going to look at in the life of Naaman and his interaction with Elisha today. Ask God to grow you in your faith as you read and study his word today.

Read 2 Kings 5:11-18

What did Elisha tell Naaman to do (see yesterday)? What was Naaman's reaction to Elisha's advice?

Why do you think he was so upset?

How does Naaman's reaction reveal a struggle with an idol? What do you think was Naaman's idol?

What did it take for Naaman to listen to Elisha's advice? What happens?

How did this event lead Naaman closer to God?

How do we see God's grace in this event in Naaman's life?

Think of your own idol worship. How has God shown you grace even though you look to other things more than Him at times?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you see and understand His grace more and more.

Day 20

What are some good things you have according to worldly standards?

What are things about who YOU are that you think are special and valuable?

Does God save us according to those things you just listed? Why or why not?

It is so easy to slip into the mindset that God saved me because I am a giving person or I treat people with respect or I have great influence over people. There are “Christians” who believe that and tell other people that. I hope that as you read the passage today that you will see this is not true at all. In fact the opposite is true. Ask God to help you think, reason and understand these important truths in his word today.

Read I Corinthians 1:26-31

According to these verses, who does God choose to be His children?

What attributes are listed that aren't the qualifications God uses in choosing His children?

Why do you think God doesn't choose those kinds of people?

What does Paul say to us in verse 30-31 about what we can or cannot do when it comes to our salvation? What does each word mean?

Why do many "Christians" want to feel as if they have contributed to their salvation?

How can our salvation be an "idol" in our lives? Is this an idol in your life?

PRAYER – Thank God for saving you by His grace and mercy, not your actions.

Day 21

What are some five occupations that could promote or support a desire to idol worship? Next to each one write down what idol they worship.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What do you want to be when you “grow up”? What are your reasons for wanting to do that? How will this occupation challenge encourage or discourage idol worship?

Those are hard questions to answer. Of course every occupation can encourage idol worship if it is all about money, possessions, power, building a name for yourself, climbing up the ladder of success. And I mean every occupation could lead to these things, could be idol worship. Yes, even being a pastor or missionary could fall into this category. Of course there are some that are easier to lead to idol worship: movie star, musician, athlete, politician, CEO. Those come with lots of money, name recognition and success in the world's eyes. So think about why you want to do what you want to do as far as a career. Is it to serve God or because you want stuff? How you answer will show you if you have an idol or not. Ask God to show you your heart as you read and study about Zacchaeus today.

Read Luke 19:1-10

What can we imply about the character of Zacchaeus from the detail we are given in verse 2?

What other reasons (besides being short) would there be for Zacchaeus to climb a tree? (Look at the last question).

Why is it significant that Jesus singled Zacchaeus out?

What does Jesus' words in verse 5 say about how he likes to work through relationships?

What was Zacchaeus' idol?

How did he address that issue in his life after his encounter with Jesus?

What is the warning to us in verse 7? How do you slip into this attitude when it comes to how you look at non-Christians?

PRAYER – Pray for a heart change – yourself and other idol worshippers

Day 22

How would you explain what someone means when they say, “He who dies with the most toys wins”? What attitudes and thoughts are behind this belief?

In what ways, small or big, have you bought into that philosophy of life?

Some of us have engaged in this philosophy without even realizing it. Think of a conversation that goes something like this: “Hey I just got the Atari video game system. It has a joystick with one button and a paddle with a twisty knob. It is great”. The next guy says, “That is nothing, I just got the Nintendo system. It has two buttons and a flat joystick that does not stick up in the air. And it has this new game called Mario brothers. It is awesome.” The third guy steps in. “You guys are playing with kids games. I got the XBOX and it connects to the internet, plays movies and games and the controller has 100 buttons and functions. It is a man’s toy.” Do you see the conversation? They are seeing who is best when it comes to their possessions. We do this with games, phones, cars, vacations, jobs, grades, etc. Idols. Ask God to teach you what it means to be content and not covet what you don’t have today.

Read Luke 12:13-21

What does the son’s statement in verse 13 reveal?

When the man asks Jesus to tell his brother to divide the inheritance, why do you think Jesus responds with this parable?

What was the attitude of the man in the parable when it came to his own possessions?

How can greed negatively impact your life?

For the man in the parable, what would be the consequence of his greed?

So what does this parable teach us regarding our possessions?

How have you or do you see greed affecting your relationship with God?

What are some steps you can take even now to be content in what you have?

PRAYER – Ask God for a heart of contentment with all that you have.

Day 23

What is something you committed to give to somebody, or an organization or some other cause, but you didn't follow through on it? (It could be money, time, material possessions, etc.) Why didn't you follow through on your commitment?

Why are people quick to make commitments that they will never follow through on? What does this reveal about their hearts?

We are captivated by stories either in person or by pictures that flash across the screen. We see people's need amid awful situations. It grabs us emotionally and so we decide based on those emotions to help either by sending money every month or by giving our time to a cause. In time, because that decision was made based on emotion, we stop giving money or giving our time because that initial picture that grabbed us has gone away. Then we stop following through on those commitments. Many of us have done that whether helping someone in need, supporting a friend, helping with someone in your neighborhood or church. It is easy for us to stop doing the things we said we would do. We will see a couple that had this struggle in Acts. Ask God to help you see your own heart and the commitments you make as you read today.

Read Acts 5:1-11

What commitment did Ananias and Sapphira make? How did they do in following through on their commitment? Who are the various parties they lied to?

What does Peter say to Ananias and Sapphira about why they lied in verse 3 and in verse 9?

What was Ananias and Sapphira's idol? What was the result of their greed, lying and idol worship?

How did their deaths impact the church? Why was there much fear in the church? What were they afraid would happen?

Does God normally strike dead those who lie about their commitments and hold idols in their hearts like Ananias and Sapphira did? How do you know?

What point was God making to the church? To the world?

How does this story make you think about your own life?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you to give sacrificially and cheerfully to Him.

Day 24

What is something that you have stolen in your life and you got away with it? Why did you take it? Why have you never told anybody?

What were the consequences for your actions if you got caught? If you didn't get caught what consequences have you had to live with?

I used to collect baseball cards when I was a kid. I can remember while working in the grocery store, that I took baseball cards from the shelf. I took them home, took out the price guide, kept the cards that were worth something and packaged up the other cards and brought them back to the store and put them on the shelf. I did this for about a month rationalizing that I was giving most cards back to the store. It wasn't until several years later when sitting in chapel at college when the Lord reminded me of that sin that I never made right. The next time I was home I got money out of my savings account and took it to the store and gave them the money in cards that I had taken years earlier. A big burden was lifted off of me. It was a burden of secrecy I carried for so many years. God knew my sin even when nobody else did. Ask God to teach you important truths for your life as you read and study the Bible today.

Read Joshua 7

What command of God did Achan break?

What was Achan's idol?

What two consequences of Achan's sin do we see in the beginning and end of the chapter?

What are some of the attributes of God that we see in this chapter?

How serious does God take idols in our lives? How do we see this here?

How should reading this story challenge you in how you look at your own sin?

What is a sin that you have committed or are committing that you think you are getting away with? What do you need to make that right? (List a couple steps.)

PRAYER – Confess your sin and ask what to do to make it right?

Day 25 – Pharisee and Tax Collector

What ways do you compare yourself to the people around you spiritually?

How have you thought that you were better than another Christian? A non-Christian? Be honest! Why did you think those thoughts?

Most people compare themselves to other people. We compare scores on a test, who goes on the best vacations, who has the best phone, who has the most followers on social media and the list goes on. We are prideful and want to think that people like us and that we are important. Sometimes that means we look down on the accomplishments of other people. It makes us feel that much better about ourselves. Our image becomes an idol. Is it your idol? Ask God to reveal this sin in your life as you read and study His word today.

Read Luke 18:9-14

How is the Pharisee described in this passage?

How is the tax collector described in this passage?

Who is the person that people would look to as the Godly person? Why would they think and believe that?

Who was the more Godly person? Why them?

What was the Pharisees idol? What was he doing with that idol?

What was the tax collector's idol? What was he doing with his idol?

Think about these two men, which one are you most like? Explain your answer.

PRAYER – Ask for help in being more like Jesus and less like the Pharisee.

Day 26 - Judas

How can greed lead to death? (Think of as many examples as you can.)

How can the desire for more, lead people with a lot, to such despair that they think of taking their own lives?

Why is that poor people seem so much happier than rich people. It seems so contradictory. Yet if you were to spend a lot of time with an equal amount of rich and poor people you would see the poor are much happier. When the Stock Market crashed in 1929, there were many rich people who killed themselves because they lost everything. You didn't hear that about people who were poor. I know Rockefeller, the great steel founder in America, said near the end of his life that he wished he could have earned one more penny. He was not happy or content with the bundles of money he already had. Do you desire to be rich? Be careful what you wish for. Ask God to reveal the attitude of your own heart as you spend time in the word today.

Read Matthew 26:14-16 and 27:3-10

What was Judas' role among the disciples?

What did Judas love most? What was his idol?

What do you think Judas expected to happen as a result of his betrayal?

At what point did Judas change his mind about what he did? Why do you think he changed his mind?

He tried to take it back. What was the reaction of the Chief Priests to his plea?

There were several things Judas did after he saw that the Chief Priests were still going to kill Jesus. What were they?

After reading this, how do we see and know that those of us that claim to follow Jesus are not exempt from the love of money or possessions? How are you struggling with that today?

PRAYER – Ask God to take the love of money and possessions away and give you a desire to serve and worship Him alone.

Day 27 – The Golden Calf

What do you spend the most time doing, thinking about or talking about? Just think of one thing that covers all these areas.

Do you spend as much time serving, thinking about or talking about the Lord as that one thing? Explain.

I love sports. When I was in high school, I participated in sports. That means I practiced, played games, played in between all that to get better. I went to basketball camps. I watched games on television. I talked about sports to all the people in my life even if they did not care about sports. It had become an idol in my life that almost took over all else. To this day I need to watch that area of my life, that it does not become an idol again. Thankfully I have a wife and children that are not as athletically inclined, so they help to keep me centered where I need to be. I hope this month has really challenged you to think about and deal with the idols in your life. Ask God to open your eyes to his truths and your idols as you read the Word of God.

Read Exodus 32

Why did the people want to make the Golden Calf?

How did Aaron fail as a Godly leader of the people?

Look at verses 9 to 14. What did God want to do to the people for their idol worship? How does Moses intercede for his people? What does he say?

Describe the scene Moses saw when he came off the mountain.

There were two punishments for this idol worship. Tell me what punishment was inflicted by:

1. Moses –

2. God –

Do you think the penalty was harsh for their idol worship? Explain.

What do you learn about God, rebellious man, and committed follower of Christ from this story?

PRAYER – Thank God for his mercy, judgment and for teaching us hard truths.

DAY 28 – King Solomon

Who is someone you consider to be wise? Why do you think that about them?

What are ways in which riches can turn a wise person into a foolish person?

When I was in high school there was a girl in my class. She was shy, smart, dressed conservatively, was nice and had a small group of friends. Her parents won the lottery. Overnight she became one of the most popular girls in school. She had multiple boyfriends, her grades slipped, she dressed more and more inappropriately, and she was not so nice anymore. Money changed her dramatically. I Timothy 6:10 says the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. It corrupts the person. I have seen that in my life. We see that in the world around us. We even see that in the Bible in the lives of different characters, many of who we studied this month. Ask God to help you understand his word as you read it today and apply it to your life.

Read I Kings 11:1-13

Solomon was considered the wisest man ever. Why?

The wisest man ever had a problem. What was his idol in verses 1 to 2?

What did Solomon do and become because of these idols in verses 3 to 8?

How was the wisest man now the most foolish man?

What was God's reaction to Solomon's idol worship? What does he say is going to happen because of the idol worship?

How did God show grace to Solomon? Why?

Solomon's idol worship impacted the Israelites and ultimately ended them up in exile. Think about an idol you are worshipping. If you don't deal with it what do you think might be the consequences to you and those around you?

PRAYER – Thank God for his grace; pray about the idol you wrote about above.

DAY 29 - Peter

What are different pains and suffering that people try to avoid if they can in life?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What kinds of things are people willing to do to avoid the pains that you wrote above?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Pain. Death. Suffering. They are all part of the life we live here in a broken and sinful world. We cannot run away from them. The picture that was given to me is that death is hunting us down from the day we are born. We cannot avoid death. Many people don't like that we cannot avoid pain, death and suffering. It makes us feel vulnerable and powerless. Many try to avoid these things in a variety of ways: denial, money, suicide, busyness, etc. We make comfort and security an idol. As we look at the example of Peter ask God to reveal to you the attitudes of your own heart.

Read Matthew 26:56, 69-75

Before you even think about this passage, how would you describe Peter, his actions, words and life?

How does the picture of Peter in this passage go against all we learn and love about Peter up to this point?

What does Peter do in verse 56? Why did he do that?

What does Peter do in verses 69 to 75? Why do you think he did that?

What was Peter's reaction in verse 75? Why do you think he reacted this way?

What do you think was Peter's idol? Explain.

How have you denied Jesus in your life? What does that reveal to you about your heart and idols?

PRAYER – Ask God for help in fighting your idols, to honor him in all you do.