

**What Is Idolatry?**  
*Presented by Jenn Miller*  
Air Dates: March 9-13, 2026

**Day One**

We are examining idolatry. Often when I hear that word, I can think of an image or a statue that is worshipped. That definitely falls into the category of idolatry, and most of the examples of idolatry in the Bible are from that category.

However, idolatry in our Western contemporary setting can look different. I think it is helpful to look at the 10 commandments to better understand this. In Exodus 20, the Israelites have been delivered from slavery in Egypt and now are entering a covenant as the special and loved people of God. But they didn't know what this looked like, so God gave his people his law.

*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:2-3).*

Interestingly, before God gives any commands to his people, he reminds them of his love, provision, and the relationship he has with them. And because of that relationship, the very first command he gives is for them to have no other gods.

The second command is to have no graven images, but first and foremost God requires his people keep him as their only God. I think this is helpful for you and me as we think about idolatry. Idolatry is when you turn to anything besides God for your fulfillment, security, hope, or comfort. We look to other things as a "god substitute."

If you are like me, it is so easy to fall into this. I can trust God in most areas but then realize I am actually putting my hope in my financial stability for security, or a person for fulfillment, or a standard of living for comfort. Are there any god substitutes in your life today?

**Day Two**

Idolatry is when we turn to anything besides God for our fulfillment, security, hope, or comfort.

John Calvin once gave a great image of the human heart. He called it an idol making factory. Just picture that. In other words, idolatry comes so naturally to us because of our sin nature. And we are blind to idols of our heart. How can you and I identify areas of idolatry so we can turn away from them?

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength (Deuteronomy 6:5).*

Anything that prevents my heart from loving God completely is an idol.

I have found the following questions helpful when seeking to identify idols in my life. First, is there anything you love so much, if you were to lose it, life would just be over for you or you don't think you could go on? If your answer is yes, that thing has probably become an idol for you.

Is there something you want so much you are willing to sin to get it? Or do you respond sinfully when you don't get something you want? Those are marks of idolatry. These questions can be hard to ask, but they are helpful in revealing things that have crept into my heart to take the Lord's rightful place.

When you love God with all your heart, soul, and strength, you can face any loss because your hope is found only in the Lord. You long to please him above anything else. Sinful behaviors or desires can be idols, but even good things can become idols.

### Day Three

We've been examining how easily idolatry can slip into our hearts. We looked at how idols keep us from loving the Lord completely—with all our heart, soul, and strength. It can be easier to spot an idol of the heart when it is clearly a sinful behavior or desire. But sometimes we even twist God's good gifts into idols.

Numbers 21 is an example of this. It describes a time when the Israelites were in the wilderness and were being bit by venomous snakes. God graciously gives Moses the provision of a rod with a serpent for the people to look at and be healed. But then years later, in 2 Kings 18:4, we find the Israelites burning incense and worshiping the rod with the serpent around it. Do you see what is happening? The people received God's good gift, but then they worshipped the gift instead of the giver.

Isn't that so easy to fall into? Augustine taught about "disordered loves"—things that are not bad in and of themselves, but their place in our hearts has become disordered. Anything you desire more than God himself is a disordered love. The good gifts of a spouse, job, beautiful home, health, children, honorable reputation, wealth, or earthly comforts can take too great a priority in our hearts if you and I are not careful. We should receive all of God's gifts with gratitude and joy, but we must hold them loosely and always prize God himself over and above anything else.

I pray God will help us properly love all his good gifts in the right order.

### Day Four

Is it really that big of a deal if I have little idols in my heart? Since we are naturally sinful and are prone to wander, why does God care so much about idolatry? These questions are good to think through.

Even though idolatry is common in the human heart, the Bible says it is extremely dangerous. In Exodus 20, God commanded his people to have no other god before him. Before giving this command, he described his relationship with the people. He was their God and they were his people. He rescued them and called them into special relationship. Therefore, he cared for them and was rightly jealous when their hearts wandered from him.

God cares about you today as well. If you have turned from your sin and trusted in Jesus as your savior, God has chosen you to be his child, and he cares about your relationship with him. He has designed you so you are most satisfied and whole when you worship him alone. Any other worship robs you of true joy and will eventually leave you empty, hollow, and lost.

Psalm 115 describes idols as having mouths but unable to speak, having eyes but not seeing, having ears but not hearing. They are incapable of action or service to the worshipper. But then verse 8 says something striking.

*Those who make them will become like them, and so will all who trust in them (Psalm 115:8).*

As my heart runs after substitutes for God himself, I actually become less. Idols rob us. This is because idols are the tools of Satan to lure our hearts. Remember Jesus' words in John 10 where he warns us

that the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. This is the work of idols. But Jesus has come so we might have life to the full.

If you recognize idols in your heart, know that through Jesus, you are not condemned but invited to repent.

## Day Five

What do you do when you find idolatry in your heart? I think one of the dangers of spending time analyzing a certain sin is it can sometimes leave us with a lot of understanding and conviction of the sin without help to know how to change.

I hope you will see the great mercy and grace available through Jesus to all who are caught in idolatry. God cares greatly about the hearts of his people because he knows that what is best for us is to worship him—that is what we were created to do.

He is worthy of your praise and jealous for your worship. God reveals areas in your heart that have idolized something above him not to condemn you but to give you the opportunity to repent.

*Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness (Lamentations 3:22-23)!*

If you see idolatry in your heart, know it doesn't change God's great love for you. His compassion toward you is still as real today as ever. His mercy and faithfulness are great. So come to God in prayer and confess whatever it is you have looked to for security, comfort, hope, or satisfaction instead of him.

Ask the Lord to give you eyes to see his beauty and worth and to draw your heart to love him above all else. God blesses the poor in spirit—those who recognize their need for him and depend on him to rescue them in sin.

Because of Jesus' death on the cross, forgiveness is available to all who confess their sin and trust in Jesus as their savior.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).*

Won't you come today and lay down your idols for something so much greater? For Jesus Christ himself.