

# Evidence of an Idol

## Luke 6:12–16 (ESV)

**INTRODUCTION:** A few things are very clear when it comes to scripture:

### 1. We were meant to **WORSHIP** God.

You were created first and foremost as a worshipper. Everyone worships something. You only find your ultimate purpose in the Worship of God through Christ.

- The term **WORSHIP** is derived from the Old English word meaning, “worth - ship”. It is an attribution of worth or value.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Every ship that travels in international waters is legally required to have a posted manifest which is used to tally tariffs and levies in foreign ports of call. That manifest has an accurate record of what is on board that vessel. For the Christian - our lives are manifests that declare the manifold glories of God. We come together on the Lord’s Day and corporately declare what is on board this vessel.

We commonly speak of worship in conjunction with the word, “**praise**”, which is where we get our word **appraisal**. This means to attribute worth to something.

We were designed to worship God.

### 2. Satan’s primary strategy is to redirect our worship toward idolatry.

The enemy wants to get you to love, value, and worship anything but God, thus breaking the greatest command, thereby committing the greatest sin. **This greatest sin is called “idolatry”.**

The most repeated command is this, “Have no other gods before me”, also forbidding idolatry.

**EXAMPLE:** In the garden Satan tempted Adam to value his word more than God’s Word.

We commit idolatry anytime we worship/value anything more than God.

So idolatry isn’t always bowing down to a statue, but it’s when anything takes a place of greater prominence in our lives than God.

That is why Paul said in **Colossians 3:5, (NASB95),**

<sup>5</sup> Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, **which amounts to idolatry.**

- Sexual sin - idolatry
- Impurity, like pornography, lust - idolatry
- Perpetual evil desires - idolatry
- Greed - idolatry

The human heart can turn anything into an idol.

**John Calvin said**, Man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols.”

In **I Corinthians 10:19-20**, Paul tells us that behind every idol is in fact a demon, a legitimate personality, a fallen angel, a follower of Satan.

So demons are willing to work through anyone or anything to convert them into an idol, thus misdirect your worship.

We were designed to Worship God, Satan misdirects our worship toward idols....

### **3. We become like that which we worship.**

The Bible tells us in, **Psalm 115:4–8 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. <sup>5</sup> They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. <sup>6</sup> They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. <sup>7</sup> They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. <sup>8</sup> **Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.**

**ILLUSTRATION:** Let me show you a prominent idol in our culture - **SCIENCE**. If you go into the average museum in America, or many high school or middle school classrooms, you will find that it is taken for granted that humanity EVOLVED into it's current state. One thing morphed and changed into another until you have Homo sapiens. Professors hold this view with religious passion. It is for them an edict of the GOD of science.

If your God teaches that one thing can morph into another, why wouldn't a young man believe he can morph into a young lady? You see, he is becoming like that which he worships.

The inverse is true...worshipping God changes us as well.

**2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

We were designed to worship God. Satan misdirects our worship toward idols and we become like our idols.

## 4. God loved us, so He wages war on our Idols.

The entirety of the OT could be reduced to God's war on Israel's idols.

**ILLUSTRATION:** It begins as soon as they leave Egypt. Moses is up on Sinai meeting with God. Aaron is down below and the people begin to demand a god they can touch like the other nations have. Moses comes down and they are having a drunken orgy around a statue of Baal in the form of a golden calf. Moses asks Aaron about it and Aaron says, "we just threw our gold into the furnace and this popped out".

Well all through the OT you see them struggling with idols. Typically, they were associated with romantic relationships.

### 1 Kings 11:4

<sup>4</sup> For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

<sup>6</sup> Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and **did not follow the Lord fully**, as David his father had done. <sup>7</sup> Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon.

**1 Kings 11** God Judged Solomon for his idolatry and told him that the Kingdom would be torn apart and the greater portion given to one of his servants.

**Rehoboam** (Solomon's son) became King after Solomon but soon after, God granted 10 tribes of Israel to a man named **Jeroboam** in judgement for Solomon's idolatry.

Jeroboam built Shechem as a place of worship for Israel. However, Jeroboam was haunted by a fear that the 10 tribes would one day desire to return to Jerusalem to worship, thus returning to Rehoboam as King. So Jeroboam built **two gold calves** and set one in **Bethel** and the other in **Dan** and he said, "behold your god Israel".

This divided worship continued in Israel over the next **45** years growing worse with each passing year, until the rule of **Ahab**.

### 1 Kings 16:30–34 (ESV)

<sup>30</sup> And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. <sup>31</sup> **And as if it had been a light thing** for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him.

**Greater sins are always preceded by making light of lesser sins.** Solomon had foolishly married 700 wives, thus infecting God's people with idolatry. Ahab intentionally married one zealous worshipper of Baal, the wicked woman Jezebel.

**Matthew Henry says in his commentary,** It seems he intentionally married her in order to bring her idolatry, witchcraft and whoredom into Israel”.

He built the **temple of Ba'al** in the royal city of **Samaria**, thus fully associating himself with the worship of Ba'al.

So you see this all through the OT...a cycle of IDOL, JUDGMENT, WORSHIP, and FALL.

**CONTEXT:** Well, we see by the time of the NT Israel was not free from idols, they had simply taken new form.

For the Pharisees in Jesus day the idol had become their **legalistic system of religion.**

The **Talmud** and the **Mishna.**

- The Talmud was the written commentary on the OT.
- The Mishna was the oral commentary on the OT.

Last week we saw Jesus correcting and reproofing the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath. Luke tells us that soon after on another Sabbath, the Pharisees brought a man with a withered hand to the synagogue to entrap Jesus, to see if he would heal the man on the Sabbath.

**TEXT: Luke 6:6–11 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all place it immediately after the incident in the grainfields, which suggests it happened soon afterward, perhaps on the next Sabbath.<sup>1</sup>

His hand was withered, which means it was likely paralyzed and had atrophied. It would have hung curled inward in a fixed position, without any use whatsoever.

Now the way this is worded indicates that perhaps the Pharisees brought this man into the synagogue in order to entrap Jesus by catching him performing a miracle on the Sabbath.

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, Luke 6–10, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 7.

<sup>7</sup> And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him.

There you see the first sign of idolatry -

## **1. You view those who do not share your idol with contempt.**

There is something about an idol that gives one a false sense of superiority. We are the chosen ones... we know how it really is... those poor fools who don't order their lives as we do just don't get it.

An idol tends to dominate your world view.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I've described it this way - if you could divide your heart into 10 acres, the idol sets up shop in the center acreage because that gives it right of way to all the other parts.

In **1 Kings 18:17–19 (ESV)** Elijah had called down God's judgement on Israel for their idolatry that came under the leadership of Ahab, but notice how Ahab greets Elijah...

### **1 Kings 18:17–19 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "**Is it you, you troubler of Israel?**" <sup>18</sup> And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals.

When Jesus comes along who has a high view of scripture, but not a high view of the Pharisees system of rules, immediately they see Jesus as the problem.

WHY? Well Jesus may expose the truth that your idol really has no power at all. It holds no lasting value.

Beyond that, remember, he has demonstrated that it is His mission to free the people from idols.

We see it in **Acts 19:23–29 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. <sup>24</sup> For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. <sup>25</sup> These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. <sup>26</sup> And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. <sup>27</sup> And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as

nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”<sup>28</sup> When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”<sup>29</sup> So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s companions in travel.

1. You View Those Who Do Not Share Your Idol with Contempt.

## **2. You no longer view the world through biblical categories.**

<sup>8</sup> But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come and stand here.” And he rose and stood there. <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?”<sup>10</sup> And after looking around at them all he said to him, “Stretch out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored.

Jesus raised a simple question that should have been very easy to answer if the Bible was your lens through which you viewed the world. They could not answer.

- For the Christian, the first question in any conflict or disagreement should always be - what do the scriptures say?
- For the Christian, any truth claim should always be met with the question - by what standard?

But the idolater soon abandons this objective revelation of truth and begins to appeal to other fallible measures.

**ILLUSTRATION:** When a husband and wife are in a conflict the first question should be - what command of scripture has been violated. If it is determined that none has - yet someone’s feelings are still hurt, it is fair to ask if perhaps the offended party has elevated an idol in their life.

1. You view those who do not share your idol with contempt.
2. You no longer view the world through biblical categories .

## **3. You express inordinate anger when your idol is challenged.**

<sup>11</sup> But they were **filled with fury** and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

In Matthew’s account in **Matthew 12:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

This was it - he healed a man on the Sabbath, that is what filled them with fury to the point that they said this man has to die.

NOW - does that emotional response make any sense? Is it logical? Suppose a person was blind here today and I was able to heal them and they could see. Would it make logical sense for someone to be so angry about that that they began a plot to have me killed?

NO. The reason the Pharisees responded as they did is because Jesus had offended their true god... their rules.

You see, that is the essence of idolatry. You bow down and worship something other than Jesus Christ. **An entire system of religion develops around it.**

There is a law - There are acts of worship - There are sacrifices - There is evangelism.

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And one of the dead giveaways that you are in the chains of idolatry is that when someone disrespects your idol, you become unreasonably violent and angry. That my friend is religious fervor.

Are there any areas in your life where you respond in a way that is unreasonable emotionally? Are there lines you have drawn in the sand that WOE to the man or woman who crosses that line?

Well that is a good evidence that you may have an idolatry problem.

BTW, have no idols before me is the most repeated command in the Bible. It was the consistent besetting sin of Israel. Now, we don't build golden calves like they did. Our idols are things like -

Hobbies, Jobs, Prestige, Control, Wealth...

### **CONCLUSION/INVITATION:**

#### **QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:**

- What are you willing to do even if you know it is not God's will?
- Do you have standards of truth that are higher than God's Word?
- Where do you look for security, meaning, happiness, fulfillment, joy, or comfort?
- What do you fear the most?
- What do you hate most of all?
- When you are pressured or tense, where do you turn?
- What are you willing to miss church for?
- What are you willing to make financial sacrifices for?
- What has inordinate sway over your emotions?
- What do you talk about the most?

Whatever the issue is - please understand that Jesus Christ will take second place to no idol. He will inevitably wage war on that which you worship until **HE** is the focus of your soul.

What he was doing with the Pharisees in these scenarios was the most KIND, loving thing he could have done. To ignore their idolatry was to condemn their souls.