



Small Group Guide: I See Some Patterns

(2 Corinthians 11:2-3)

Sermon Overview:

This sermon begins a series on idolatry as “the war for my devotion,” warning that anything competing with or replacing Christ- money, success, approval, pleasure, self, or false spiritual practices - can corrupt a believer’s undivided devotion. The pastor calls listeners to recognize subtle exchanges they’ve made, renounce idols, return Jesus to the center, and live in wholehearted worship, obedience, and allegiance to God.

Key Takeaways:

- **Devotion** — The active orientation of the heart towards God as God. It is cultivated through awareness of who he is, giving him total allegiance, bringing life into alignment with his will, and abiding in a vibrant and holy relationship with him.
- **Idolatry** — The act, whether subtly or intentionally, of replacing Christ with a substitute and giving it the trust, worship, allegiance, honor, or devotion that belongs to God alone.

Main Points Recap

- 1. There is a war for your devotion.** Regardless of how long you have been saved, how gifted you are, or how active you are in church, something is always competing for your devotion to God. No believer is exempt from this battle.
- 2. Idolatry does not begin with statues** - It begins in the heart. Modern idols are not ancient carved images. They are things like money, attention, success, image, power, fame, sex, and self. These begin as subtle heart-level exchanges before they manifest outwardly.
- 3. The pattern of idolatry follows a progression** - God reveals himself and his will. A competing voice challenges that truth. Deception begins when the competing voice is entertained. An exchange is made in the heart. That exchange eventually comes out through worship and service to the substitute.
- 4. The enemy steals devotion incrementally** - The word used for thief in Scripture carries the meaning of taking a little at a time. Devotion is not usually lost all at once. It is stolen piece by piece through small compromises, small exchanges, and small moments of spiritual neglect.
- 5. You cannot hide who you are devoted to** - Whatever holds your deepest devotion will eventually surface in your behaviors, your priorities, your words, and your worship. Devotion — to God or to an idol — always produces visible fruit.
- 6. The path back is the same process in reverse** - Recognize what has replaced Jesus. Renounce it. Exchange the lie for the truth of Scripture. Worship and serve the Lord. Abide in a vibrant and holy covenant relationship with Christ.

Discussion Questions:

1. **The Pastor described three groups of people this message is for** - those who need a warning, those who need discipleship, and those who need restoration. Which of those three resonated most with you personally, and why?
2. **The Pastor warned that devotion is stolen "klepto"** - a little at a time. What are some of the small, seemingly harmless exchanges that you have seen quietly erode someone's devotion over time? Have you experienced this personally?
3. **The Pastor said, "The problem is not that there are many voices"** - The problem is the authority you give those voices in your life." What voices in your current season of life carry the most authority? Are those voices aligned with Scripture?
4. **The sermon walked through the progression from Eve's account in Genesis 3** — God speaks, a competing voice challenges that word, deception sets in, an exchange is made, and ultimately worship and service follow the exchange. Where in that progression do you think most believers tend to get stuck or fall? Why?
5. **Paul uses the image of a bride devoted to one husband to describe the kind of devotion God desires.** What does that image communicate about the nature of the relationship God wants with us? What does it suggest about how God responds when something else takes his place?

Practical Applications

Choose at least one:

- Conduct a personal devotion audit. Set aside 15-20 minutes this week to honestly evaluate the current state of your devotion. Ask yourself: Where is my time actually going? What do I think about most? What do I serve most consistently? What would someone observing my week conclude that I am most devoted to? Bring your honest reflections to your next group meeting.
2. **Identify one exchange and address it.** Based on the sermon's progression, prayerfully identify one area where you have made a subtle exchange — trading something of God for something else. Write it down. Bring it before God in prayer. If it involves a habit, a relationship, a media consumption pattern, or a thought pattern, make one concrete decision this week to begin reversing that exchange.
 3. **Strengthen your knowledge of Scripture.** The pastor emphasized that ignorance of God's word makes believers vulnerable to deception and exchange. Commit to reading one chapter of Scripture daily this week — not as a ritual, but as an act of devotion. Consider starting in the Gospel of John or the book of Romans.
 4. **Have an honest conversation.** Identify one person in your life — a spouse, a close friend, a mentor, or an accountability partner — with whom you can be honest about the state of your devotion. Share what God is speaking to you through this series and ask them to check in with you.
 5. **Examine what you are consuming.** The pastor challenged the group, particularly young people, to examine what voices they are allowing into their minds through music, social media, entertainment, and relationships. This week, take inventory of your regular media consumption and ask: Is this building my devotion to God or quietly competing with it?