



First Baptist Church Selmer

JESUS VS CULTURE: BUILDING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW • IMITATE! •
EPHESIANS 5:1-7; EXODUS 20:1-4 • 2/4/2024

MAIN POINT

Christians are commanded to be imitators of Christ Jesus no matter the culture in which they live.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are some ways we are all guilty of idolatry in our culture today?

In 2015, Lifeway conducted a study on Sunday church attendance versus football viewership. On any given Sunday are you more likely...

To be in church - 25%

To be watching football - 18%

Doing both - 25%

Doing neither - 32%

The caveat: Men are more likely to watch football on Sundays (24%) than attend church (17%).

With the demand for other sporting events on our time and lifestyles, you could estimate that an even smaller number is attending church with their families than stated above. On any given Sunday, especially in the summer months, perhaps less than 10% of dads are getting up, putting their families in a vehicle, and taking them to church.

At its root meaning, idolatry is the worship of created things in place of the worship of Creator God. What created things are most tempting for you to worship or idolize: Money? Pleasure? Food? Toys? Work? Health? Yourself? Why are you tempted by those things?

We live in an age of distraction. We are pulled in many different directions by technology, social media, friends, work, and hobbies. While none of these things are by definition “distractions,” they can easily distract us from what is most important. God created us to love, worship, and enjoy Him (Isa. 43:7; Deut. 6:13; Phil. 3:1). When we elevate anything to the place of God, that thing becomes an idol. By looking at Paul’s warning to the Ephesians Christians, we will be challenged to acknowledge our own idols and turn our hearts back to the Lord who made us for a relationship with Himself.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 5:1-7.

"1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. 5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them;" (ESV)

This portion of Ephesians comes amid a larger section in which Paul describes specific ways a person’s identity in Christ impacts daily behavior. Paul told the Ephesian believers to imitate God by living a life of love modeled on Christ’s self-sacrificing love for us. Before the believers were saved, their lives were characterized by thoughts and deeds of spiritual darkness, but in Christ by light. They were to please the Lord by living consistently as those who belong to the light. The believers also were to live wisely, seeking to know and

follow God's will. Those filled with the Spirit are distinguished by a close walk with the Lord that is characterized by praise and thanksgiving toward God.

After describing the Christian lifestyle in a positive way (5:1-2), Paul defined specific actions believers should avoid. What is the common link among the sins listed?

What purposes do these sins serve in our lives?

The sins Paul listed in verses 3 and 4 are examples of self-gratifying sins through which people find value and acceptance in things other than their identities as children of God. Lustful behaviors take sex—something holy created by God for oneness in marriage and procreation—and twist it into something that meets self-indulgent needs. Similarly, obscene speech (v. 4) is incompatible with imitating God in love. Vulgar speech clouds our ability to communicate God's love, grace, and goodness to others.

How does self-indulgence contrast with the self-giving nature of Jesus?

How are the sins in these verses examples of idolatry (v. 5)?

What did Paul warn was the outcome for an idolater? How does this help you understand the seriousness with which God takes this sin?

Understanding culture's influence on our bodies, minds, and speech is of the utmost importance because, like it or not, we all imitate something or someone. There's no middle ground on this one: We're either learning how to imitate Christ or we're imitating the world around us. Idolatrous behavior limits our service to God and robs us of effort, time, and energy that we could have used to live for Him. God took the issue of idolatry so seriously that the first two of His Ten Commandments take issue with it.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EXODUS 20:1-4.

"1 And God spoke all these words, saying, 2 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 You shall have no other gods before me. 4 You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." (ESV)

Given God's description of Himself, what makes idolatry so offensive?

We may not struggle with serving multiple gods, but still have many idols in the world today. How do these idols impact our relationship with God?

In what sense do you think God is “jealous”? How is that different from the way a human might be jealous?

God begins the Ten Commandments with two commands that speak to the issue of idolatry and what we worship. Idolatry happens when you prioritize anything in life above your relationship with God. Sure, idolatry looks different in our culture than it did for Moses and the Israelites; we don't bow before statues or make calves of gold. But we are no less guilty of idolatry than they were. In fact, the idols in our culture are much harder to recognize, because they often take the shape of the everyday—relationships, possessions, leisure activities, and so on.

Describe a way your idolatry has had a negative impact on your relationship with God and/or other people lately. What have you learned today that you can apply to that situation?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

If you are a follower of Christ, then the first and most important command God calls you to is prioritizing Him above all else. How you spend your time and your money, what you think about, the way you relate to others, the job you have, how you raise and discipline your children, the way you love your spouse, parents, and friends ... everything about your life is to be defined by your love for God and His love for you. What matters most is bringing glory to God and remaining focused on worshiping and serving Him regardless of your circumstances.

How does your relationship with those things need to change in order to make your relationship with Christ your first priority?

What is one step you could take this week to encourage your family to pursue Christ above all else?

**What does a life that truly has God in the primary place of worship look like?
What are some of the key characteristics of this lifestyle?**

PRAYER

Close in prayer, thanking God for bringing us to Himself through the sacrifice of His Son. Pray that God would help us to repent from giving our hearts in worship to other things. Pray that God would help us get rid of the idols in our lives and devote our hearts completely to Him. Pray that we as a group would support and encourage each other as we seek to prioritize Christ in our lives.

COMMENTARY

| EPHESIANS 5:3-7

Paul warns the Ephesian Christians not to engage in the activities of those who are disobedient. Paul is saying that we are not to do these things because we are no longer those who are disobedient. Since we are not part of them anymore, we should not be partners with them. It is not a matter of salvation in this instance but a matter of identification. We are not like them anymore; therefore, we ought not to live like them. If we are partners with them, we are forewarned. Such people do not share the kingdom inheritance. Rather, they endure divine wrath.

| EXODUS 20:1-4

20:1-2. The covenant at Sinai was made at God's initiative. Before God gave His principles for right living to the Israelites, He reminded them of His identity and of what He had done for them. He identified Himself as the LORD, the personal name whose significance He had revealed more fully to Moses at the burning bush. The LORD had delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Israel's freedom from slavery rested in the Lord's love and power. What He had done for His people gave Him a claim on their lives. He had set them free. He had a right to take the initiative to tell them how to enjoy the freedom He had provided.

20:3. The first principle for relating to God is that we should have no other gods before Him. Ancient peoples generally worshiped more than one god. A variety of gods were worshiped in both Egypt and Canaan. The Israelites' sole allegiance, however, belonged to the Lord who had redeemed them. The Lord requires our sole allegiance. He, the Creator of the universe, is the only true God. The Lord not only created us; He has redeemed us by the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.

20:4-6. Idol worship is forbidden in this passage because the Lord is a jealous God. The Hebrew word translated jealous also could be translated "zealous." The word in this context does not denote a negative quality such as pettiness that we often associate with jealousy in our culture. Rather the word jealous in this context conveys the fact that God expects complete loyalty from His people. Genuine love is exclusive in a positive sense. God is zealous that we worship Him alone because He knows that such worship will result in what is best for our lives. Because of God's great love for us, He wants us to experience the best life possible.