

DOES AMERICA WORSHIP FALSE GODS?

Many years ago, during ancient times, it was very common for people to worship gods of wood and stone. These false gods were idols - gods which really didn't exist, but had been created by the skill of man. Even today, in some parts of the world idols of wood and stone are still being worshipped.

What about America? Is there idol-worship in America today? Perhaps not idols of wood or stone, but I would point out three idols that are being worshipped today: the idol of lust, the idol of materialism, and the idol of self. These idols are what keep people from receiving God's love and compassion.

THE IDOL OF LUST

The idol of lust and sexual sin is being worshipped and followed by many, many people in this country. This idol is towering over our society, with billions of dollars flowing into it every year. Worshipping the idol of lust has led to the break up of many marriages. Following the idol of lust has led to the outbreak of new and terrible forms of sexually transmitted diseases, the use of abortion as a form of birth control, sexual abuse of children, and many other destructive practices.

God's original purpose for sexuality has been corrupted and perverted. God designed sexuality as a beautiful gift, but only as it is protected by the purity and commitment of the marriage vows between a man and a woman. The false god of lust promises people temporary pleasure, but hides the destructive consequences which will surely follow. Following the lust-idol will inevitably lead to pain and tragedy.

THE IDOL OF MATERIALISM

Many people are also following the false god of money and materialism. It is called CHASING THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR. People who try to find satisfaction in material things will be sadly disappointed. Jesus said, "A

man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15). He also said: "For what is a man profited, if he gains the whole world (the material world), and loses his own soul?" (Matt. 16:26). Material things will never be able to provide true satisfaction in life.

Watching people blindly pulling the lever of a slot machine, over and over and over again, is a vivid reminder of how empty it is to pursue money. But some people give little or no outward indication that they are serving the god of money. Someone can look "good" in the eyes of our materialistic society, but have an attitude and lifestyle that is devoted to the idol of money.

THE IDOL OF SELF

The third idol is the idol of self. When self is placed ahead of God, it becomes an idol. The idol of self can take many forms, because there are many ways that people place their own will and desires ahead of God. Putting self first has led to the breakup of many marriages. Putting self first leads to physical and sexual abuse, various forms of violence, "stepping on other people" to get ahead, and many other destructive practices.

Putting self first does not lead to happiness or contentment, in spite of what Hollywood or anyone else says. Self-will must crumble, in order for us to acknowledge God for who He really is. We must yield to Christ, the living Savior, and allow Him to have first place in our lives.

OTHER IDOLS

Of course there are other idols that could be mentioned: drugs, alcohol, and other addictions; love of power, love of pleasure, and false religions such as witchcraft and the occult. An idol can really be anything that you allow to take first place in your life, instead of the true and living God.

THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD

Anyone who desires God's love and forgiveness must turn away from idols, and surrender to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Then you will truly experience the compassion and love of God.

The true and living God has been revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is called the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). He has fully revealed to us what God is like. When Jesus went to the cross, He was taking the punishment for our sins. Dying on the cross, Jesus was paying the penalty for OUR sins. Jesus was God in the flesh, and because He is the God of love, He willingly died to forgive you. When you turn to Jesus Christ and accept Him as your Lord and Savior, all your sins are taken away. He completely accepts you and forgives you of all your past sins, and cleanses you from them. But for this to happen, you must turn away from all the idols in your life, and completely reject them.

You also begin a totally new relationship with Jesus Christ, when you accept Him and put your faith in Him. Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35). A personal relationship with Him as your Savior and Friend is what will truly satisfy you. Following the idols of sex, money, self, and other idols will ultimately leave you empty, and alone. A living relationship with the living Christ WILL satisfy you, as you give Him first place in your life. The compassion and love of God will fill your heart and become a reality in your life.

Many people are devoted to their idols. They will spend huge amounts of their time, money, and efforts on serving an idol. But worshipping idols leads to hurt and destruction. Surrendering to Jesus Christ leads to forgiveness, love, and eternal life. Turning to Him means a genuine commitment to Him, to follow His plan for your life. Thankfully, many people are turning away from the idols of destruction, and are finding new life in Jesus Christ. The Lord has a good plan, a beautiful plan for your life, if you yield your life to Him. His love, forgiveness and compassion are everlasting.

This means a genuine commitment, a genuine surrender and trust in the living Christ. Will you put your faith in Him, and entrust your life to Him today? If this is what you are really willing to do, pray sincerely in your own words, and ask Jesus Christ to truly become the Lord and Savior of your life. Ask Him to forgive your sins, and cleanse you. And make a genuine commitment of your life to Him, to follow Him as your Lord. This means a commitment to follow Him through the good times, and

the challenging times. Your faith will grow and your love for Him will deepen and mature as a result.

I encourage you to pray to Him now if you are willing to surrender your life to Him.

To Deepen This Relationship with Christ:

When you begin a relationship with Christ, this relationship needs to grow . It grows by honestly talking to the Lord, and opening up your heart and letting Him into every area of your life. This is what happens in prayer, as you talk to the Lord and open up your heart to Him. God's love and compassion will flow into your life.

You can talk to Him about any and every need. Then, when you read from God's Word, God is able to speak to you. He speaks to you in your heart and conscience through His Word. Read especially through the New Testament, reading a portion of it every day. Allow the truth that you read to impact you and draw you closer to Christ.

To grow in Christ, you also need to become involved in a church that truly preaches and lives the Bible. This will help you to strengthen your faith, and to grow in your understanding of the Lord. It is also important to be willing to share your faith with others, so that they can also have the opportunity to come to Christ, and to follow Him as Lord.

If you have received Christ, please feel free to contact us at: erickson5998@sbcglobal.net / We would love to help you in your walk with Christ.

By M.A. Erickson

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