

I. Introduction: What does idolatry have to do with the rest of John's epistle? 5:20

II. What is the nature of idolatry?

A. Idolatry is putting any created thing in the place of God. Exodus 20:4-6

B. Why do people resort to idols?

1. The human heart is an idol factory. Romans 1:22-23 Mark. 7:21-22 Gal. 5:19-20
2. People are not satisfied with the revelation God has given of Himself. They want something they can see with their eyes and touch with their hands. Ex. 32:1-6

C. Why is idolatry so terrible?

1. Idols misrepresent God. John 4:24 I Ti. 1:17 Isa. 40:18-26 II Co. 3:17 Col. 1:15
2. Idols demean and dishonor God. Acts 17:29 Jer. 2:12-13
3. Idolatry robs God of the glory due Him. I Cor. 10:22 Ex. 34:14 Ps. 78:58-59
4. Idol worship ultimately goes to Satan. I Cor. 10:20 Ps. 106:37
5. Idolatry is foolish and useless. Ps. 115:3-7 97:7 106:19-20 Is. 44:9-20 Je. 10:6-11
6. Idolatry will ruin you. Ps. 115:8 106:35-f Isa. 42:17 Rev. 22:15

III. Don't practice idolatrous worship. Exodus 20:3-5 32:1-10

A. Pagans worship gods of stone, wood, and metal. Acts 19:23f I Thess. 1:9

B. God does not want to be worshiped using any image. Ex. 20:3-5 32:1-10

1. All physical representations of God are forbidden. Lev. 26:1 Deut. 4:15-20
2. Those who use images often claim they are not worshiping the image, but they are using the image as an aid to worshiping God. Ex. 32:1-10

C. Where does idolatry exist in the church today?

1. John would be utterly shocked by so called Christian houses of worship which are filled with statues, paintings, and other so-called aids to worship.
2. Professing Christians also ascribe honor and glory, which belong to God alone, to *saints* and angels. Col. 2:18 I Tim. 4:1 Rev. 9:20
3. What about pictures (and statues) of Jesus? Isa. 53:2-3
4. What about crosses and crucifixes?
5. Man-centered worship is idolatry.

IV. Flee all other idolatrous substitutes for God.

A. God is insulted by all false ideas (mental images) of Himself.

1. The antichrists are idolaters. I John 2:22-23
2. All false religions are idolatrous because they promote false concepts of God.

B. We are idolaters when we allow any created thing to rival God's place in our hearts.

1. Idolizing people: heroes, celebrities, self. Jer. 17:5-6 Proverbs 29:25
2. Those who love the world are idolaters. 2:15-17 Col. 3:5 James 4:4
 - a. Some worship *Mother Earth*. Rom. 1:25
 - b. Some make an idol out of possessions. Col. 3:5 Mt. 6:24
 - c. Some are completely devoted to success in their career or education.
 - d. Many make an idol out of pleasures. Phil. 3:19 Isa. 55:1-2
3. Other idols include nationalism, science, and philosophy. Mark 12:17 Col. 2:8

V. Positively.

- A. Jesus Christ is the cure to idolatry. 5:20 1:1-4 Col. 3:1-4 2:9 1:15 John 17:3**
- B. Worship God in Spirit and in truth. John 4:23-24**
 - 1. God is Spirit and cannot be accurately portrayed by any human representation.**
 - 2. We know God through His Word. John 1:14,18 14:8-10 Col. 2:9 1:15 Heb. 1:1-3 II Co. 5:7 Rom. 8:24**
- C. Put God first in your life. I Cor. 6:19-20 10:31**
 - 1. Find your highest pleasure in Him.**
 - 2. Subordinate every other interest to Him. .**

VI. Concluding applications.

- A. Guard yourself from idols.**
- B. Ask God to make your idols known to you and repent. Ps. 139:23-24 97:7a**
- C. The best protection against idolatry is a life which delights in God. Isa. 55:1-2**

Discussion questions

- 1. What is idolatry?**
- 2. Why does John end his epistle with a warning against idolatry?**
- 3. Why do people resort to idols?**
- 4. What is wrong with idolatry?**
- 5. How are many professing Christians guilty of idolatrous worship?
What excuse do they give?**
- 6. What do you think about wearing a cross as jewelry?**
- 7. What do you think about putting a cross in a church building?**
- 8. How is bad theology idolatrous?**
- 9. In what ways do people make idols out of possessions?**
- 10. In what ways do some make idols out of people?**
- 11. What is the cure to idolatry?**