



A weekly resource to spark biblically-centered conversations with your kids about the issues they face in today's youth culture.

## THE FOOLISHNESS OF IDOLS

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*The great Reformer John Calvin famously said that the human heart is a round-the-clock 24/7 “idol factory.” Because we have been designed to worship, we find ourselves choosing to worship all kinds of false gods. Our kids are not immune. Has your son or daughter become enamored with the latest pop superstar? Have they spent every waking moment binge watching the latest Netflix series? Have they changed their appearance, lifestyle, and or habits based on the latest social media TikTok trend? Idols are not just a thing of the biblical past, but are ever present in our world today.*

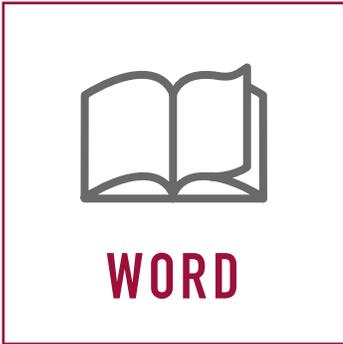


### What is Happening?

**How we spend our time is one diagnostic indicator of what’s most important in our lives. There has been extensive research in the areas of how teens spend their time, and it is revealing just how idols have crept into our culture and lives. Today’s kids spend inordinate amounts of time on a variety of good pursuits that too often become ultimate pursuits: academics, athletics, body-image, relationships, etc.**

- A Pew Research survey of Americans provided a window into what people believe gives them meaning, all of which are good things when kept in perspective, but which can turn into idols. The Research found that 69% of people surveyed said family gave ultimate meaning, 34% their career, 23% money, and faith came in at 20%.
- Social media presents kids with potential idols who may at some point be chosen and followed. Recent Digital Marketing Institute research found that 70% of teens now trust social media influencers more than celebrities (who for generations past were known as “teen idols”). Take for instance that TikTok currently has 1 billion monthly active users. TikTok also boasts that 21% of internet users use TikTok with close to 22% of all social media users being on the platform. This seemingly shows that our kids can be sucked into idolizing the latest influencers and the beliefs/behaviors they promote to their followers.
- A former VP for public relations at the University of Notre Dame, James Frick, once said, “Don’t tell me where your priorities are. Show me where you spend your money and I’ll tell you what they are.” If you looked at the places where you spend your money, what would that reveal about what is most important in your life? Like most adults, our kids easily fall into idolizing money, the things money can buy, and the status/attention those things can bring. For example, teens spend more on clothing/fashion than anything else, which can be an indicator of idolizing style and the perceived benefits of fitting in.
- Sports can be an idol, not only for those playing or coaching, but even for parents and fans. A 2019 Project Play survey found that the average child spends 11.9 hours per week playing their sport/activity, while some more committed athletes spend upwards of 60 hours per week playing their sport, especially during the season. Our children’s participation in sports and other extra-curricular activities can be something parents idolize by living vicariously through their success.





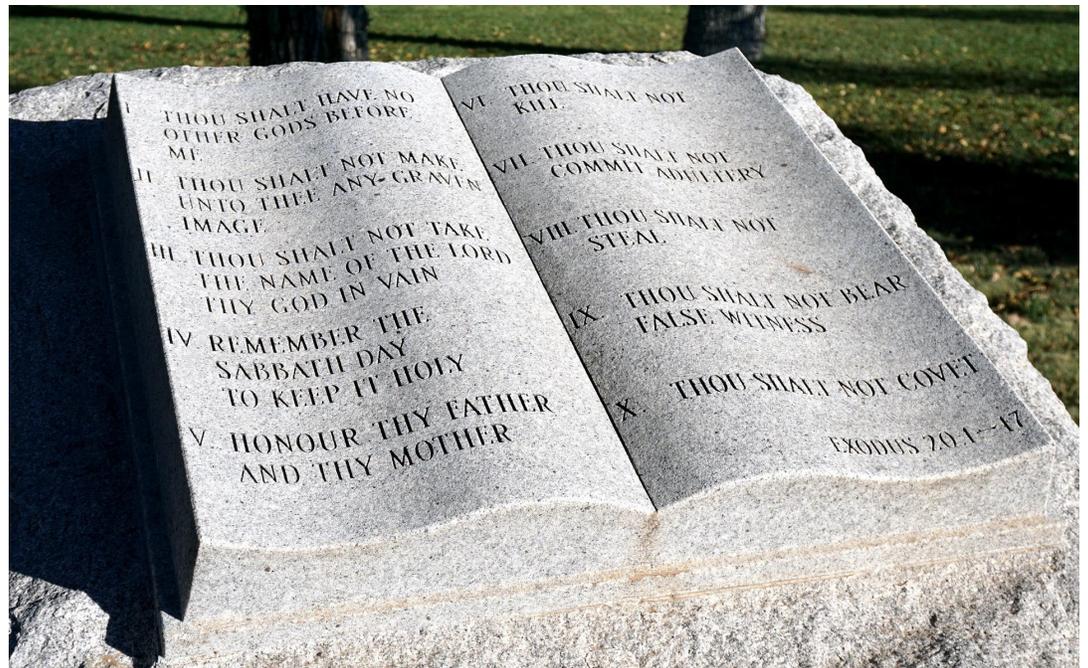
## What Does God’s Word Say?

What is an idol? Tim Keller once said, “An idol is anything more important to you than God. Anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.” Idols certainly have not disappeared from our modern society.

**In the Bible, it is clear that idolatry is warned against by God in both the Old and New Testaments.** In the Old Testament the Israelites were surrounded by idols. Consider this commandment, one of the 10 commandments, in Exodus 20:4-5: “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything... you shall not bow down to them or serve them.” We are prohibited from creating or having any other gods besides God, while also giving the positive command to only worship God, putting nothing before Him.

**Isaiah 44:9-20 describes the foolishness of idolatry.** There is folly in the way that the craftsman of an idol takes wood and stone to make a “god”, which is made of the same material that he uses to make a fire and keep himself warm, yet he prays and worships that same piece of wood.

**The Apostle Paul would expand the meaning of idolatry in Colossians 3:5.** “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Paul shows that it is not just having a physical thing that you worship and pray to, but idols are often desires, passions, and the coveting of things. Paul goes beyond defining idols as what is physically present, to being what your mind and heart puts as a priority over God and what He calls us to care about. We are called to put to death our desires for the things of this world. We are called to even “hate” the world and the things of this world if they take us away from serving, loving, praising, and worshiping God and God alone.





## Conversation Starters and Questions:

Our world today is full of idols. People today worship and give adoration to more than just statues. People worship other people (celebrities, athletes, musicians, etc.), ideas (authenticity, individualism, identity, technology), and lifestyle choices (sexuality, gender, money, appearance, entertainment, fame, etc.). We must constantly be engaged in prayerful self-evaluations so that we might realize when we have taken a good thing and made it into an idol.

- Parents need to analyze and reflect on their own lives. Do you have idols? Do you desire money, power, prestige, entertainment, recreational activities, or hobbies to an unhealthy level? How can you show and tell your kids about the idols with which you struggle, along with the steps you have taken to combat these things taking priority over your relationship with Christ and what He has called you to do?
- Ask your children and teens these questions: Is the time you are spending on this activity or your daydreaming taking up most of your waking hours? When you have a spare minute in your day is your mind focused on a good thing that you've made into an ultimate thing that takes up your thoughts? If you were to look at your schedule, what does it say about the things that are of the utmost importance? Do your sports or activities dictate everything you do in a day? What is at the center of your conversations with friends at school or online? What does your spending indicate about who/what you are worshipping as an idol?
- Be willing to talk with each other in an attitude of love and grace when we see an idol creeping into our lives. As parents how are we making sure that we are leading by example, not giving into idolatry in our own lives? We need to give our kids a godly example of what it looks like to devote our time, money, thoughts, and energy in ways that worship the One True God.

### *For further reflection:*

***Guide your kids into making wise decisions with their time, money, and energy. Actively work to train them up in ways that help them to identify, remove, and replace idols with adoration and service to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.***

*“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”*

*(Colossians 3:5)*



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