

Homegroup Notes for Week Beginning 17/2/2025.

Introduction:

'Above All', Belmont Morning Teaching, February 2nd- March 23rd, 2025.

"Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods."

Psalms 40:4

Introduction:

Why?

This series seeks to draw the church back to a full God-glorifying life in Christ by considering the effect of idols. It recognises the creation of an idol whenever an idea, an object, or an aspiration usurps the place of God at the centre of our lives. In this way we break faith with God, who says at the outset of his covenant **'You shall have no gods before/besides me'** (Exodus 20/3) and we find ourselves enslaved- as 2 Peter 2.19 says, **'They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for "people are slaves to whatever has mastered them."'**

Idolatry is a matter *for the church* and its worship, a matter of discipleship. It is not about sniping at the world but recognising when the world is shaping the culture and more importantly the values of the church and of believers. What remains is a body without integrity, an ersatz church lacking the conviction and freedom that comes from being devoted to the Lord Jesus.

Put otherwise this series seeks to provide a pathway to reassess faith and to sift out all that distracts us and hinders us by fixing our eyes afresh upon Jesus (Hebrews 12.1-2, the subject of our 'All Together' services on January 5th and February 23rd)

What?

The series will be structured around four phases.

- The first week will identify what an idol is, setting that within a contemporary understanding having looked at the way that idols are presented in Scripture.
- Week two will look at two ways in which idolatry is addressed and dealt with from the Bible, both of which ultimately looking to the call back to God in Christ.
- Weeks three to six will look at specific contemporary areas of potential idolatry and examine the way they work and what the good life centred on Christ does to reclaim good creation from being turned to seductive counterfeit gods.
- Week seven will celebrate a life lived out of true worship and identify the anchorage in faith that glorifies God and sets us free to enjoy shalom in creation.

Week Beginning February 17th:



Read Matthew 13.45-46

Spend some time as a group in prayer celebrating the 'great value' of the Kingdom of God and putting Jesus in the centre of your meeting from the outset.

You might like to use this simple song,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hyBJwTKmQ>



What does the word 'idol' conjure up to you?

Tim Keller's definition of an idol that we are using for this series reads,

'What is an idol? It is anything that is more important than God to you, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to get you what only God can give you...An idol is anything we cannot live without...it turns a good thing into an absolute that every allegiance or value.'

Does this add anything to your understanding?

Read Exodus 20.1-6

- Looking at these verses, what foundation is being established for the relationship between God and his people?
 - How does God introduce himself?
 - What is the basis for this relationship?
- In the Sunday teaching we spoke about the fact that people become like that which they worship.
 - How does the story in Exodus 32.1-6 demonstrate this?
 - The implication is that if we worship God we become like him. Genesis 1.26-27 tells us that we are made in the image of God to reflect the image of God into creation. Colossians 1.15 informs us about how this is restored in Christ.
 - How does true worship make us a better witness?
 - How do idols affect our witness?

You may like to consider the effect of being faithful in Christ in making us like him by reading 2 Corinthians 3.18 and 1 John 3.2.

Read Jonah 2.8-9



- How does Jonah speak of idols, grace and salvation?
- Use these verses to turn to prayer...how does this relate to your life at this time?

Close by thinking about the challenge to train our affections towards God, to base our life on desiring him...read Psalm 37.4 as an encouragement, an exhortation and a blessing.