

Homegroup Notes for Week Beginning 7th April 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 April 7th :

NB. These notes are not designed to be followed in their entirety. Please select from them the areas you want to discuss. This week's material is developed from the talk on March 16th about power, position, and responsibility.

You may like to begin by reading Paul's prayer in **Ephesians 3.14-21** in its entirety. It ends with the following blessing.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Steve began his sermon speaking of ending prayers '...and may all the glory go to God.'



Why not begin this evening in a time of prayer, silently and out loud, giving glory to God for creation, salvation and God's goodness in our everyday? You might like to use Ephesians 3 as a springboard for this.

Read Matthew 4.1-11.



- When Jesus comes to face the three temptations in Matthew he is tried and hungry. Do you feel most prone to temptation at times of weakness? When are we at our most vulnerable? How can we be best prepared?
- In the third temptation Jesus is offered a great prize but at a terrible cost. How does remembering who is LORD, who has authority in our lives help us to resist temptation?
- In Matthew 28.18, Jesus says he has 'all authority in heaven and on earth.' How do you think he has gained this authority? What does that authority look like?
- Matthew 4.10 is Jesus' simple repost to the idol of power. Can you think of practical ways that we are being challenged to 'worship the LORD our God and serve him only'. PAUSE and pray for one another.
- How are we set free by knowing Jesus as our LORD when it comes to personal significance? How does our security in Jesus and our worship help us to overcome temptation and fear?

***"Sin is what happens when you worship an idol and let it dictate your behaviour. Idolatry is the real problem...to be genuinely human- to reflect the true image of God- you need to abandon idols and worship him alone."* – Tom Wright**

- What do you think about this observation of the connection between idols and sin?
- What place does true worship have in our overcoming sin?
- If worshipping idols leads to sin, what do you think worshipping God and serving him only leads to?



Why not end in a simple act of worship? A time of prayer, singing a simple song or listening to a worship song, sharing simply in communion?