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# Words of Truth

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## Flee From Idolatry

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God has been clear that idolatry is sinful (Deuteronomy 5:7-9, Deuteronomy 11:16-17, Acts 15:20, I Corinthians 6:9-10, and I John 5:21). When God tells you to flee from something, He is making the danger of that particular thing plainly known to us. God gave this instruction: *“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, **flee from idolatry**”* (I Corinthians 10:14).

Throughout the Bible, we can clearly see that the worshipping of false gods was met with severe consequences (Leviticus 26:30, Judges 2:11-14, Psalms 106:36-41, etc.). There is no way that an honest person can read anything in the Bible about idolatry and think that God is okay with it. The punishments of old show that. The punishment that awaits idolaters also shows that God hasn't changed His mind about idolatry. In the Judgment, eternal fire is the punishment for idolatry (Revelation 21:8). God doesn't wink at anyone who puts other gods into their lives.

Our God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5, Exodus 34:14, Deuteronomy 4:24, and Deuteronomy 5:8-9). His jealousy is not something He hides nor does He refrain from acting upon it. Notice this: *“God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies”* (Nahum 1:2). When people see statues being worshipped and such the like, they generally understand that God doesn't approve of that idol worship.

It is likely that most who will read this article will find no problem in what is written above. In fact, most would agree with the truths above (though many do not apply those things to their idolatries). Where people fail with the subject of idolatry is in understanding that idolatry is not limited just to stone gods, wooden gods, etc. While idolatry certainly includes man-made gods (Leviticus 19:4), idolatry includes other things as well.

### Idolatry Includes More Than Bowing Down To Man-Made Gods

Notice these Scriptures: *“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, **nor covetous man, who is an idolater**, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God... Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and **covetousness, which is idolatry**”* (Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5). According to the two Scriptures you just read, covetousness is idolatry.

When you look to define “covetous man” and “covetousness” as it is used in the two verses quoted above, you will find some interesting things to study. The word in Ephesians 5:5 is translated from the Greek word “pleonektes” (Strong's # 4123) and it means: “holding (desiring) more, i.e. eager

for gain [avaricious, hence a defrauder]:--covetous" (Strong's Dictionary). The word in Colossians 3:5 is translated from the Greek word "pleonexia" (Strong's # 4124) and it means: "avarice, i.e. [by implication] fraudulency, extortion:--covetous(-ness) practices, greediness" (Strong's Dictionary).

When you step back from the dictionary and you look to the Scriptures regarding the mindset of greed, covetousness, etc.; you can fully understand why God calls it idolatry. Consider what the love of money does to people: "*For the love of money is the root of all evil: **which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows***" (I Timothy 6:10). The love of money is not good. It causes one to covet and err from the faith. Then, once those types gain that money, they begin to trust in it more than God (I Timothy 6:17 and Revelation 3:16-19).

When anyone loves something enough to covet it, that particular item is going to cause more issues (understanding that the coveting of that thing is a big problem in itself; Ephesians 5:3). From here, we should be able to connect some dots and understand that anything that we can covet after can become an idol in our lives.

When you yearn [have an intense feeling or longing for something] to possess a car, a house, a job, a husband, a wife, a child, a pair of shoes, a video game, etc.; you are coveting that particular thing. That then puts that item in the category of a potential idol. We've seen this all around us if you think about it. Consider that man or woman that gets his or her "dream car". He or she worships that car. He or she treats it like the most important thing in his or her life. When that person gets his or her "dream job". That job then becomes the most important thing in his or her life. It is all he or she cares about. They put that job first and foremost in life. That is idolatry. You cannot love anyone or anything more than God!

### **God Must Be First**

You and I are supposed to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, and minds (Matthew 22:37). We are supposed to put the kingdom of our Lord above all other things in this life (Matthew 6:33). We are supposed to seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1). We are supposed to set our affections on things above, not on the things of this world (Colossians 3:2). Your car, job, spouse, child, house, etc. is not supposed to be your life. Christ is supposed to be my life and yours (Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 3:4). You cannot love anyone above our Lord (Matthew 10:37-39). You must be willing, not just in word either, to leave everything to follow our Lord (Luke 14:33). If there is that thing or person in life that you just cannot imagine living without to be faithful to the Lord – THAT IS YOUR IDOL!

### **Conclusion**

If you have identified something in life that is your idol, you have to put that thing in its proper place. While you cannot leave your spouse (Romans 7:1-3) or forsake your parental responsibilities (Ephesians 6:4 and Titus 2:3-5); you have to figure out how to meet those obligations without making them first in your life. If your career or belongings are your gods, you have to set them aside to remove the distractions (II Corinthians 10:5). If it has come between you and God, MOVE IT!