

## Freed from Idolatry: Putting God First

### 1 Corinthians 10:1–22

#### Student Devotional

Idolatry. Sounds like something from ancient history, right? Golden statues, weird temples, people bowing down to carved images? Not exactly something we deal with today.

Or is it?

Tim Keller puts it this way: *“An idol is anything more important to you than God.”* That means idolatry isn’t just about statues—it’s about **anything that captures our hearts more than Jesus**. Success, approval, relationships, comfort, entertainment, even “good” things like family or ministry—if they push God to the side, they’ve become idols.

Paul’s message to the Corinthians is clear: **You can’t live for God while keeping one foot in the world**. If He’s truly Lord, nothing else can take His place.

So the real question is: **What’s fighting for first place in your life?**

### Day 1: Being Around God Isn’t the Same as Following Him

#### Scripture:

**“For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea... Yet with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” (1 Corinthians 10:1, 5 ESV)**

#### Think About It:

Ever met someone who’s been **around** church their whole life but doesn’t really follow Jesus? That’s exactly what happened to Israel.

They **saw** miracles—God splitting the Red Sea, raining food from heaven, guiding them with fire in the sky. They had **all the right experiences**, yet their hearts still wandered.

Paul’s warning is simple: **Just being around Godly things doesn’t mean your heart belongs to Him**. You can go to church, read the Bible, even serve in ministry, but if your heart is chasing something else, you’re just like Israel—**close to God on the outside, but far from Him on the inside**.

**Pray It:**

Lord, I don't want to just *look* like I'm following You—I want my heart to be truly Yours. Show me where I'm just going through the motions, and draw me closer to You.

**Do It:**

Ask yourself: **Am I actually pursuing God, or just checking off religious boxes?** Take one step today to grow deeper—spend real, intentional time in prayer, worship, or Scripture beyond your usual routine.

## Day 2: What's Your Golden Calf?

**Scripture:**

**“Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.’”(1 Corinthians 10:7, ESV)**

**Think About It:**

Remember the golden calf? While Moses was meeting with God, the Israelites got impatient. Instead of waiting, they **took control and created their own “god”**—something quick, visible, and easy to follow.

Sound familiar?

- **We don't feel secure, so we chase money.**
- **We don't feel loved, so we obsess over relationships.**
- **We don't feel in control, so we turn to entertainment, success, or social media to distract us.**

The problem isn't always **what** we love—it's when we love those things **more than God**. Idolatry happens when we take a good thing and turn it into an ultimate thing.

**Pray It:**

God, help me to recognize the things that compete for my heart. I don't want to replace You with anything else—show me where I need to put You first.

**Do It:**

Identify **one thing** in your life that might be fighting for God's place—something you turn to for security, identity, or escape. Take a small step this week to loosen its grip and put God first.

## Day 3: Don't Play with Fire

### Scripture:

**“We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents.” (1 Corinthians 10:9, ESV)**

### Think About It:

You know that feeling when you're **pushing the limits**? Maybe sneaking a little too close to sin, seeing how much you can get away with. That's what the Israelites did.

They **tested God**, assuming He'd keep protecting them **even as they ignored Him**. They treated His grace like a safety net while they did whatever they wanted.

We do this too:

- *“I know this isn't great, but God will forgive me.”*
- *“I'll obey later... after I do what I want first.”*
- *“God hasn't stopped me yet, so I guess it's fine.”*

Paul's warning? **Stop before it's too late**. God's grace is real, but **don't mistake His patience for permission**.

### Pray It:

Jesus, I don't want to test Your patience—I want to trust You fully. Give me the strength to obey You **before** I get myself into trouble.

### Do It:

Be honest: **Where have you been testing God's patience?** Maybe it's a relationship, a habit, or something you've been ignoring. **Today, take action to step away from it.**

## Day 4: Run. Don't Walk.

### Scripture:

**“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.” (1 Corinthians 10:14, ESV)**

### Think About It:

Paul doesn't say *“try to resist”* idolatry. He says **RUN**.

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Think of it this way: If you saw a house on fire, would you walk casually out the front door, or would you **sprint for your life**?

That's how we should treat sin. Instead of **seeing how close we can get** without getting burned, we should **get out fast**.

- If you struggle with lust, **don't scroll that feed**.
- If you're tempted to gossip, **change the subject**.
- If you're being led into compromise, **cut off that influence**.

Paul's advice? **Stop flirting with danger. Just get out.**

**Pray It:**

God, help me stop playing with sin like it's harmless. Give me the courage to **run away from things that pull me away from You**.

**Do It:**

What's one **practical boundary** you need to set to flee from temptation? Change a habit, delete an app, or set up accountability. Do **something today** to protect your faith.

## Day 5: You Can't Have Two Masters

**Scripture:**

**"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." (1 Corinthians 10:21, ESV)**

**Think About It:**

Jesus made it clear: **You can't serve two masters**. You either follow God, or you don't.

The Corinthians wanted **both**—they wanted to worship God *and* keep their old pagan habits. But Paul shuts that down. **Loyalty is exclusive**.

- You can't **worship God on Sunday** but live for yourself the rest of the week.
- You can't **claim Jesus as King** while letting sin call the shots.
- You can't **serve God half-heartedly** and expect full blessings.

Following Jesus means **fully surrendering**—giving Him every part of your life, no matter the cost.

**Pray It:**

Lord, I don't want to live with one foot in the world and one foot in Your kingdom. I want to be **fully Yours**. Show me what needs to change.

**Do It:**

What's one area where you've been **holding back from God**? Maybe a habit, a mindset, or a comfort zone. **Surrender it today.**

## You're Ready for Class!

This week, you've seen that **idolatry isn't just about statues—it's about anything that competes with God in our hearts.**

So here's the challenge: **What's one thing you need to surrender to put God first?**

Come to class ready to share—and let's commit to living **fully devoted to the one true God!**

## Before We Gather

- What are some “idols” we can unintentionally create today—idols that may not look like statues but still threaten our devotion to God?
- Why do you think Paul draws so heavily on Israel's history to caution the Corinthians—and how might this apply to our own church contexts?
- Why is “fleeing from idolatry” so crucial, and in what ways might modern forms of idolatry be just as spiritually dangerous as ancient ones?
- Which of Israel's specific sins (idolatry, sexual immorality, testing God, grumbling) resonates most with modern believers, and how can we guard against it?
- Have you ever seen overconfidence lead to a spiritual downfall—either in your life or someone else's? What does this teach about humility and dependence on God?
- If we redefine “idolatry” as anything that competes with God's supremacy in our hearts, what are some key contenders today, and how can we flee from them?
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