

will grow up. They will become adults whether you help them or hinder them they are going to become, at least in terms of age, an adult. Most of them in our culture now move away. If you find your ultimate identity as being your child's parent that is leading to an empty place. Physically we can do all we can to stay fit and active and we should care for the body God has given us. Yet, there will come a time when we all will utter these words to our friends "I can't do that any more." We will be like Jeff Foxworthy describes as people who "use to could." Even our money cannot be taken with us. It will either dwindle away or be redistributed, but it cannot go with us.

Paul reminds us that our idols are as nothing. They are great gifts from God. They give us joy and they give us great memories and help define us, but when we make them god...they leave us empty.

Paul's final point is that we must flee idols because they hurt our witness. Paul describes a final aspect of this eating food offered to idols. In this instance it is what to do when you are eating with a non-believer. If nothing is said about the meat and the idols don't worry about it. If you don't know about the meat then your conscience is clear. However, if the non-believing friend says here is some meat and by the way I got it at a good price it was offered during an idol sacrifice. Paul says at that moment refuse to eat the meat. Now that seems rude. However, Paul says that you do not eat the meat for the conscience of your non-believing friend.

This seems odd, but Paul is showing us how to have a witness that is apart from the world. If the non-believer looks at our lives and says well they are just like me. I can't tell any difference in them and they claim to be a Christian. Their values look like mine. Their actions are just like mine, in fact, sometimes worse than mine. If following Jesus means nothing, then why should I follow Jesus?

My friends, if our lives are like everyone else in culture, then what good is it to follow Jesus? If our language is as bad as our co-workers, then what difference has Jesus made? If our rudeness and hatred toward others is just like everyone else and sometimes worse and done in the name of Jesus, what good is there in following Jesus? If what we value with our time, money and energy is just like the non-believing neighbor, then what good is it in

following Jesus? Paul is saying for the sake of the non-believer we must be different, even if our freedom in Christ does not condemn us.

Tim Kellor calls this being and unalienated alien. He says we are aliens in this world as followers of Jesus. That is we are not to be just like the culture and we don't adopt the norms of our culture. However, we are unalienated aliens. Meaning although we are different, we do not then spend our time alienating everyone else. We are aliens but through our love, kindness and humility we seek not to alienate others by our values but just the opposite, we are trying to woo others to Jesus through our choices. If the church has a future in America it will be when the church decides to stop looking like the culture and instead look more like Jesus. How can we expect the non-believer to turn from their idols and follow Jesus if do not first turn from our idols and follow Jesus?

We must give up our idols because they are hampering the work of the gospel.

Senseless man (woman) who cannot create a worm and yet makes gods by the dozens. Idols are destructive and deceptive. They lead to nothing and they ruin our witness for Christ. Give them up... we must identify them and let them go. For the gospel's sake, for our sake, for God's sake.



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Give It Up - Idols

1 Corinthians 10



It was the French philosopher, writer and statesman that said "O senseless man who cannot create a worm and yet makes gods by the dozens." God says it different than us when He commands us "You shall have no other Gods above me, and you shall not create an idol of your own making from heaven above or on the earth or beneath the earth or waters and bow down to them." There is only one true God. Yet, as senseless as we are we are in the habit of creating gods by the dozens.

Paul states it plainly here in 1 Corinthians 10, "Flee from idolatry." Today we are thinking about what it means to "Give It Up!" In particular what does it mean for us to give up idols.

When we think about idols we might have various thoughts and pictures in our minds. When we look at the Old Testament we find over and over again God telling God's people the Israelites to worship God and God alone and turn from idols. In the Old Testament the picture of an idol varies. Sometimes it is the worship of part of God's creation. It might be the worship of the stars, the sun, the moon, the river, the ocean deep or even the earth itself. They would worship even fertility. There were agricultural gods, the gods of the sea, wind and air. There is of course the worship of certain nation gods. Every nation and tribe had his or her own god or gods. These were idols.

There is also the worship of created idols. Actual carved and created idols that could be seen measured and bowed down too. In the Old Testament there are various words that are translated idol. Let me share four with you.

1. Terrafim- these were household gods. Many times small idols that had been carved and carried with you. Remember Rachel had household gods that are discovered in her tent. At the end of the movie *Gladiator* you will recall once

Russell Crowe's character, General Maximus Meridius, dies his fellow slave in one of the last scenes of the movie goes into the arena and buries the small household gods of Maximus. Every household had their own gods.

2. Teslem- this term means image. It was the idol of creating an image of god, or humans as a god or a statue to represent a god. An example might be the creation of statues to the Canaanite god Baal.
3. Pesel- this term means carved out. It means to create an idol of stone, wood or some other substance. The prophet Habakkuk makes fun of such idols in Habakkuk 2:18-19 he says "Of what value is an idol that a man has carved? Or an image that teaches lies? For he who makes it trusts in his own creation he makes idols that cannot speak. Woe to him who says to wood come to life. Or to him who says to a lifeless stone wake-up and give guidance. It is covered with gold and silver there is not breath in it. But the Lord is in his Holy Temple let all the earth be silent before him." Habakkuk makes fun of that which we create. Does wood and stone have life? Of course not. How ridiculous.
4. Gillulium- don't tell me that God does not have a sense of humor. An idol is sometimes referred to as Gillulium and the term is a derivative for the Hebrew term that means excrement or droppings. Pun and insult intended by the Biblical writers.

In the New Testament the idea of an idol is something similar and yet different. The idols that Paul is faced with in the Greco-Roman world were the pantheon of gods held by the ancients. Paul goes to Athens and comes to the main market place and finds idols or gods of every kind. It was common for every family to have their own god, the nation have a god, a region to have a god, even you might have a god of your vocation. What was very interesting about these gods was how it fostered relativism.

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That is everyone had their own god and who were you, as an artist or musician, to tell an artisan that their god was worthless. It really was the time when you had your own god and if that god works for you... having a god is better than having no god at all. In fact, you might remember in Athens Paul says they had even erected a statue to the Unknown God. Just in case they missed something they were covering their tracks. They did not want anyone offended.

In our culture, the idea of idols is very subtle. In fact, most of us today would say we don't worship idols. We are not worshipping carved images or pagan gods. Timothy Kellor points out that we do really live in a pagan culture. It is pagan in that there is great relativism. Everyone just pick the idol or god that works for them and who am I to suggest that your god is nothing.

One pastor says the way to discover our own idol worship is to simply ask the question where do we turn when the chips are down. What do we value the most with our time, money and energy? What is the thing that defines us? When someone describes us what do they say about us? These are questions that might reveal just what is in danger of being our idol.

I find the idea of every family and tribe and people had their own idol. What is your family's idol? What do you spend your free time pursuing, and what do you fund above all things in your budget? You know what I mean. Do I have to state the obvious? I mean some families are known as athletic families and spend every bit of free time at the ball field or at the court or in the gym. Some families are art families. They spend all their extra income on dance outfits, instruments or art supplies. Some families are tech families. They always have the latest tech innovation in their home, car and pocket.

I am not suggesting that any of these things are evil. In fact they are incredibly good things. Gifts from God that make life interesting, give purpose and satisfaction. I am just saying there are some good things that can easily become our idol. It is true every family has their own god.

In the Old Testament and New Testament we are told over and over again to flee from idolatry. Why is this important? Because God is a jealous God and deserves and desires our ultimate love. Jealousy is a misunderstood term. When we speak of God being jealous we are speaking about a Holy Jealous love. As one pastor said "Anger is not the opposite of love. The opposite of love is indifference." God loves us with and holy zeal and when we choose to love our self or another or even God's creation more than God... there is jealousy. God desires

that we desire God above all things. So we must flee idolatry.

Paul, in warning the Corinthians, speaks of the danger of idolatry in three ways in this chapter. Paul first reveals that idolatry is destructive and deceitful. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 we find a warning from Paul concerning idolatry. It is a warning using the experience of the Israelites and their exodus experience. The Israelites are delivered from bondage out of Egypt and the make that 40-year journey of maturing to the Land of Promise and yet, on the way over and over again they turn away from God and the result is God's judgment and their destruction. Verse 5 is a very telling verse "Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert." You will remember that because of their sin and turning from God that the original generation was not allowed to go to the Land of the Promise.

Paul continues to give example of what happens to those who worship idols and not God. Paul using Israel as a warning says so if you think you are standing firm be careful that you don't fall. It is the time when we say we would never worship an idol that we are probably secretly in the process of creating one.

Paul continues his warning that idolatry is not only destructive but also deceitful. Paul warns us that we must be careful lest we fall. We can be deceived. Then Paul writes so lets be sensible about this. In other words, use some logic when it comes to idols. Paul reminds the Corinthian Christian that when they come to the Lord's table and eat the bread and drink the cup, that they participate with Christ and brothers and sisters in Christ the church. The Lord's Supper, this mean is a sacrificial meal. When we eat the bread and drink the cup we are participating in the body and blood of Christ. In other words, that act is not just eating bread and drinking the cup. There is something more to it. We are bound together spiritually by that act.

In the same way, Paul argues when one of the Corinthians offers a sacrifice to an idol as part of idol worship there is a spiritual part to it as well. Yes, Paul writes the idol really is nothing but the spirit behind it Paul calls of demons.

Paul continues you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and cup of demons too.

What is Paul talking about? This whole discussion is part of a larger discussion that Paul is addressing. Let me see if I can summarize for you. When a Corinthian became a Christian, they were faced with a great dilemma. As part of the city of Corinth and their family and occupation there were certain gods to which they sacrificed. The

question is now that they have become a Christian should they continue in these times of sacrifice. To complicate matters it was not just the actual moment of bowing down and offering a sacrifice, which sometimes was merely celebrating their city-state and its god. Sometimes it was just being a good citizen that led to the sacrifice and the moment of worship. If this was not complicated enough, there was the issue of the meat offerings to these idols and gods.

Sometimes there was meal that was observed after the sacrifice was offered. The meat was taken from the altar and then consumed by those who were there as a part of the celebration. To complicate the matter further, sometimes there was meat left over from the sacrifice or the meal and it was taken and sold in the marketplace. Most of the time when you went to buy meat in the marketplace, a great luxury, you had no idea of knowing if it had been offered to an idol or god.

WE ARE DECEIVING OURSELVES IF WE THINK WE CAN PROCLAIM JESUS IS LORD ON SUNDAY AND THEN SERVE OUR IDOLS THE REST OF THE WEEK. PAUL SAYS, "ARE WE TRYING TO AROUSE THE LORD'S JEALOUSY?" SO PAUL WARNS US IDOLATRY IS DESTRUCTIVE AND WE MUST BE ON GUARD BECAUSE IT IS SO SUBTLE AND DECEITFUL.

What was the new Christian to do become a vegetarian? So, Paul has been addressing this complicated matter for several chapters in 1 Corinthians. In Chapter 8 he gave some instructions about how to act around other believers. Paul simply said that our freedom on Christ gave them the green light to eat meat offered to idols. For an idol is really nothing to begin with. So, the Christian who wanted to buy meat in the marketplace that had been offered to an idol could purchase it and eat it in good conscience. However, Paul adds in Chapter 8 if you are eating with a fellow believer and they feel different on this matter, then it is better not to eat the meat offered to idols. It was better not to offend who Paul refers to as the weaker believer or brother. So, you can eat it if you want, no problem. However don't offend the less mature Christian who has not arrived at that place of understanding.

Now Paul turns his attention to the actual participation in the sacrifice to an idol and later in this chapter to the eating of such meat with a non-believer. Paul warns against the continued participation in the actual offering of sacrifices to idols by the Christian. Although the idol is nothing, it however does lead to idolatry.

Here is Paul's point. We should not think we can come and worship God and partake of the body and blood of Christ on one day and then go and offer a sacrifice to an idol on the next day, while thinking it does not matter

and that God does not care. We cannot live these double lives and think it does not matter to God.

We are deceiving ourselves if we think we can proclaim Jesus is Lord on Sunday and then serve our idols the rest of the week. Paul says, "Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy?" So Paul warns us idolatry is destructive and we must be on guard because it is so subtle and deceitful.

Paul also reminds us that idols are nothing. That is although the spirit behind them are demons they actually do not exist. There is only one true God. That is what is funny about our idols and that is we place ultimate importance on what should be of secondary importance. Those idols we create are not truly gods. They cannot ultimate save us, deliver us nor fulfill us. They simply pacify our desires and create an insatiable desire for more.

Ronda Rousey, the MMA fighter who was the undefeated Bantam Weight Champion, had it all it appeared. She was redefining what a woman who was a fighter looked like. She was pretty and fierce. She was marketable in every medium. Most of all she was undefeated champion destroying her opponents, until she went toe-to-toe with Holly Holm. In that bout she was unable to defeat Holm. In fact, in the second round a kick to the head by Holm knocked Rousey out and also knocked her from the ranks of the unbeaten.

In a recent interview on the Ellen show, the tough and tenacious Rousey came to tears as she recounted the devastation of that defeat. She spoke of how she thought of suicide. Ronda Rousey was no longer undefeated. She was no longer the most feared woman. She was no longer the champion. She said to herself, "if I am not this... then who am I?" She is a great example of someone who created her idols of fame, fortune, reputation and career and saw them crumble in a moment leaving her devastated.

Our idols will do that to us. That job and career that we idolize. One day someone else will sit at our desk, have our title and the business will go on. We very quickly will become someone who used to work here if we are remembered at all. Our marriages, as important as they are, will end one day. One day, and hopefully years from now, Robin and I will no longer be Jeff and Robin. It will either be Robin or Jeff. Our identity of being a spouse will end. That is so harsh I know, but it is true. Our children