

American Idols

Answers the Question:

Who is God, and what is He like?

Big Idea:

God commands us not to worship idols because He is passionate about protecting us from a self-destructive path and being deceived into thinking that God is not truly the one true God of the universe.

Key Scripture:

Exodus 34:14

Each year, literally millions of idol-wanna-be folks sign up for the dream of becoming the next Carrie Underwood or Taylor Hicks...wait a sec, who is Taylor Hicks? Anyway, I'll admit I'm a fan.

But something I am clearly not a fan of is something the show reminds me of every week, and that is idolatry.

How would you define idolatry? Most people associate this word with carved images and freaky looking statues, and to be sure, that is accurate. But I believe there are American idols in our midst that are just as deceptive and ultimately just as destructive.

Interesting, isn't it? We make fun of cultures that pray to gold statues, when at the same time we are locked up in the prison of materialism and the false security of money. I guess you make anything an idol. Boyfriend, girlfriend, star athlete, academic success, Facebook, Farmville, sex, drugs, or even the person you look at in the mirror every day.

So what is wrong with idols and idolatry? Is God jealous? Well, yes...but not in the petty, immature sense that we experience. Listen to His view:

You must worship no other gods, for the Lord, whose very name is Jealous, is a God who is jealous about his relationship with you (Exodus 34:14).

The word for jealous in both of these verses should more appropriately be translated as 'zealous'; this is God's intense passion to protect His children from anything and everything that would take His rightful rule in life and ultimately destroy you.

In other words, when we make something or someone more important than God, we start a chain reaction that will transform us into petty, self-absorbed people who miss out on the incredible joy-filled life that can only come from worshipping the one true God.

You've probably heard of a man named Jonah. He was sent on a mission to help millions of people turn away from idolatry so they could find God and live life the way He designed it.

Ironically, Jonah's idol was his Jewish pride, which God had to break in the belly of the whale. When he was taking his ocean journey, he turned back to God, and his statement is very interesting:

*Those who cling to worthless idols
forfeit the grace that could be theirs.*

*But I, with a song of thanksgiving,
will sacrifice to you.
What I have vowed I will make good.
Salvation comes from the LORD" (Jonah 2:7-10).*

I think at the heart of idolatry is salvation. People desperately searching for what will save them from a meaningless and purposeless existence. So when they find something or someone that gives them a temporary feeling of meaning and value, it becomes an object of worship that will ultimately disappoint and fail.

Take a lesson from Jonah. Don't cling to worthless things that will never come close to the infinite joy, meaning, purpose, and value that comes from loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Jesus Christ made a way possible to worship God in spirit and truth, so find the grace that can be yours by trusting in Him as your only hope of salvation.

And finally - like Jonah, we are called to bring God's message of salvation through Jesus Christ to the idolatrous culture we live in and to make disciples who make disciples.

Remember these words from the Apostle John:

We know that Jesus Christ the Son of God has come and has shown us the true God. And because of Jesus, we now belong to the true God who gives eternal life. Children, you must stay away from idols (1 John 5:20-21).

Especially those American 'idols'!

Alt-ernative Questions:

- Where is there idolatry in your life?
- Is there a need you're looking to idols to satisfy, and how can God meet it?
- How does this truth change your perspective about the Christian life?
- What are some ways you could apply this truth to your life?

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