

Homegroup Notes for Week Beginning 3/3/2025.

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 March 3rd:

This week's material is developed from the talk on February 9th about 'How to deal with idols' and seeks to consider practical tools and approaches to bringing our living before God and honouring him as we seek to follow Jesus.

Please note that you will probably need to be selective from this material as it is too much to cover in one session. Take time to stop, reflect and pray together. Try to end with time to resolve together as you think about the life of your group.



If you are asked not to think about a blue elephant, it is harder than you think. In choosing not to think about a blue elephant your mind is filled with blue elephants. The trick is to think on something else- red elephants for example. If we do not want to fill our lives with idolatry, we need to think on something else, or need to think through something else. Jesus.

Read Philippians 4.8-9 (cf. Romans 12.1-2)

- What does this passage encourage us to do with our thought life?
- What is the consequence?



Spend some time sharing good, pure, lovely, admirable, right things that you are grateful for and aware of in your life.

Have a time of prayer giving thanks together for these things and for God from whom every good and perfect gift comes (James 1.17)



Read Ezekiel 14.1-6

This was the passage Simon spoke from on February 9th, where he talked about spotting and smashing idols.

In this passage there is a serious situation where idols in the heart cause people's relationship with God to stumble. Ezekiel speaks of a process of renewal that involves something that God does and something that people do. All of this begins with 'Godwards' language (language addressing God), not running from God. Ezekiel calls this 'inquiring of the LORD'

- In verse 5 what is God seeking to do? How do you think he does this?
- In verse 6 what does God call us to do? This action happens in two stages- what are they? How does this transform both our inner well-being and our outer behaviour?

Read 2 Corinthians 10.1-6

Paul is defending his ministry in these verses, claiming that he has authority, but that authority is different to worldly authority and possibly different from the sort of authority the Corinthian church operated by. His way to 'spot and smash' is described in verse 5

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

- Paul connects behaviour to ideas. It is arguments from the prevailing culture, which steal the heart of the church that he calls his readers to address.
 - What does he call on the church to do with such arguments?
 - What do you understand by 'take captive?'

In *The Message* the same passage speaks of '*...tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ.*'

- What role does Scripture have to play in this? (Ephesians 6.17)
- What role does the Spirit have to play in this (Galatians 5.25)?
- What role might the church have to play in this?
- How is this process not merely about saying 'no' but also about saying 'yes'? (Galatians 2.20)

What positive, lovely practices might shape the life of your group together?

How can this right thinking lead to right living?