

Contemporary Idols

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both..." ~Matthew 6:24 (NIV)

I look around and every person has a pocket computer. Eyes are at the screens; some are taking selfies and sending them on to Facebook or Instagram. Others are playing games, checking email, texting, or talking on the phone. I think I'm the only one there with my tiny Gideon New Testament in my pocket. The Word always brings me comfort. Yet, looking around, I see a society connected to a device that may or may not connect people. "I have a Bible App on mine," someone might say.

Are our devices the new gods?

To find out, I checked my time, talent, treasure. Am I spending them in worship, prayer, reading the Bible? Hmmmm. Oh dear.

1. Every morning, I read my devotional passages and thoughts online. Check one for God.
2. Then I check other apps. Check one for device.
3. I tithe. Check one for God.
4. I spend a lot of money on and through the devices. Check one for the device.
5. I spend a half hour or so in the morning and evening exploring God's word. Check one for God.
6. I spend 4-6 hours with email, Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, online classes. Check one for device.
7. I go to church livestream or in person. Check one for God.
8. I watch TV, movies, and listen to music. Check one for device.

Score: God=4; Device = 4. TIE GAME. not good...

We cannot have two Gods. That is clear enough. Has my device turned into an idol? If God is first, the answer is perhaps. God must come first.

But wait, what if God is using these "idols" to his glory?

During the pandemic, we went to live streaming our services, so now people could participate from afar. The device is now used FOR God instead of as God.

During the pandemic, communications are essential, and using Facebook, Instagram, texting, and messaging to show love for neighbor is doing God's work.

Perhaps it's all about how the devices are used. The key is that we still need to take time for God and His work using the tools that we have. The tools are not gods; they are God's.

What Now? Week 5

Reflection: How do you spend your day? Make a list. What is your God vs. Device score? How are you using your devices? Are they tools for God or serving as idols? Are there other “idols” that take you away from God?

Response: All devices keep track of screen time. Do a reality check. On each device, check your screen time and work to decrease secular use of devices. Try attending livestream services, compline services, or Zoom services. Make it a point to make at least one service every Sunday, either in person or online. If you don't have a church, find some online and attend their online worship services.

Prayer: Most merciful God, I confess that I may have inadvertently spent more time with my devices, scrolling and not getting my work done. I repent. Forgive me and help me worship you and only you. Help me identify and remove idols from my life so that I can focus on your will and way for my life. Help me use all things and do all things for your glory. Amen.