True Way Presbyterian, Grace Baptist, & Crossroads Int’l Church/ CIC again Dr. Rick Griffith

29 May 1994 & 6 December 1998 & 8 June 2008 & 3 Feb 2013 Message #13 of 24

NLT 35 Minutes

**When You’re Idle About Idols**

Title

*1 Corinthians 10:1–11:1*

**Topic:** Idolatry

**Subject:** Avoid idolatry

**Complement:** or God may discipline you for this involvement with demons.

**Purpose:** The listeners will commit themselves to avoid all forms of idolatry.

**Attribute:** We worship our jealous God

# Introduction

### “The Golden Calf” by Emily Akin (www.christian-drama.org/files/christian-drama/golcal.doc)

Calf

Mrs. Everyone: Hello? Oh! Hi! No, no, you just caught me. I've got two minutes! On Sunday? No, not this week, dear. You know I have a problem with the Old Testament! Why? Oh, come on! We have moved on a bit since then, don't you think? All that stuff about the golden calf, worshipping idols, etc. It's so irrelevant. I do think they should start treating us as adults; take into account the fact that we're educated round here, professionals. We've got nothing in common with that lot. You know - the Israelites. Anyway, it's my only chance to go to Bluewater this Sunday. I want to have a quick look at the sales and I've promised Sam the newest Playstation 2 game for his birthday. I know! There's no accounting for taste!

(Phone rings)

Mrs. Everyone: (Hastily. Out of breath) Oh, well done! You just caught me: Just off to tennis. Can't today. Sorry. Perhaps next month? The season has nearly ended. You should be safely past the golden calf by then. Yes, I know I'm awful! But one mustn't get too serious about these things, I always feel. Balance in life is important, don't you think? Besides, I really need the exercise. There's been a big push on at work recently, and things are frantic I so rarely get the chance to leave the office... Anyway, thanks for the thought..... Must dash...

(Phone rings)

Mrs. Everyone: (Slightly impatiently) Look, dear, I simply can't stop. I appreciate you keeping in touch and everything but please don't mention church again. I feel guilty, of course I do, but life is far too hectic to fit in yet another commitment, and that Old Testament series was enough to put anyone off! You know I'm running this self-improvement seminar next weekend? Yes! You can't imagine the nightmare it's been trying to arrange it all. It's so hard to know what one's priorities should be. Must go.

(Phone rings again)

Mrs. Everyone: (rudely & angrily) Look! Can I ring you back? This really isn't a good time. I’ve asked you not to keep calling me. Who? Come on, dear, I know it's really you. Stop this pathetic joke. It's in very poor taste. What do you mean, The Lord? *Which* Lord ...Oh! ... I just wasn't expecting you now. Yes, of course I recognize you now (low & urgent, panicky). What do you mean, you don't know me? Lord! Hello! Hello! (line goes dead)

### I don’t like smoke. Susan and I both are from California, but we can’t stand smog too. In southern California you wake up to the sweet sound of the birds coughing. We were glad to learn Singapore had cleaner air than it did 20 years before we arrived.

Smog

Shortly after we came to Singapore in 1991, one day we saw dozens of fires burning in front of homes, businesses, and public places. People burned huge piles of paper, fanning the flames as large billows of smoke poured into the air. Being Californians used to laws against public fires, we asked, “Why is all this burning allowed?”

Fires

Then someone told us about the hungry ghost. I thought, “Ghosts? And *hungry* ghosts? Even if there *were* ghosts, would they really get *hungry*?”

Ghost

One day after our family ate at Denny’s we saw a Chinese family next door in front of their paint and hardware storefront bring out bags of paper. “Ah, the Hungry Ghost Festival!” we surmised as the sons laid two metal sheets on the parking lot before their business. Then they poured seven huge garbage bags full of fake money on the sheets. Finally they topped off the meter high pile with several flags and ignited an inferno.

Fire

I went up to interview the mother. “Excuse me, can you tell me what you’re doing? I’m new and from America and haven’t seen this done before coming to Singapore.”

“Oh, we’re celebrating the hungry ghost,” she said. She seemed embarrassed about being a modern lady partaking in a Buddhist ritual, so added, “It’s a Chinese custom.”

Hungry

“So you believe ghosts get hungry?” I asked.

“Well, this paper money may help them buy food,” she replied. “The more paper money we burn, the more money the ghosts will have to buy food.”

Food

“Who sells them food?” I asked.

“Well,” she said sheepishly, “Like I said, it’s just a Chinese custom. I don’t actually know if they get the money or food or not.”

“Now, is this ghost an ancestor of yours—like a relative who has passed away?”

Flags

“No, it’s just a ghost who helps our business prosper.” At this point, I backed off. In her kind way she gave each of our two boys a flag, which she translated as “celebrate the seven month.” Her daughters also delighted each of our boys with an orange from their Buddhist altar. A flag and an orange—the way to the hearts of preschoolers!

• Oranges

• Trans

In a sober moment in the car I asked Susan, “Well, honey, how do you feel about eating food offered to idols?” (referring to the oranges). “Oh, boy,” she said, “I’ve read about this in 1 Corinthians but I never thought I would face this issue myself!”

Black

At home we gathered at the garbage can in front of our house, telling the boys Jesus didn’t want them in our home. They cried as we threw their flags and oranges away. How sad! Millions offer to a spirit with no name or identity who may bring material prosperity, but *they have to feed this spirit*! How great to know a God who *has* a name, who is *never* hungry, who provides for *us*, and who feeds *us* in His Word.

### What would you have done in this situation?

You?

#### Would you have eaten the oranges, thanking God for saving you money for food?

• Eat?

#### Or would you have given them to a Buddhist neighbor?

• Give?

#### Or would you have thrown them away like we did?

• Toss?

### Maybe you have never encountered a situation involving food and idols, but do you think Christians like you and me are ever involved in idol worship?

Bow Down

#### I guess this depends on what an idol might be, right?

#### As we saw in Emily Akin’s sketch, idolatry doesn’t need a golden calf—it can be our time priority of ***shopping*** above worship—or commitment to the god of ***exercise***—or that we need to go to a ***self-improvement course*** to the neglect of the Word of God. Idolatry is simply placing ***anything else*** above God!

Calf

### In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul addresses eating idol food at a pagan celebration. Is it OK or not? Paul’s answer is a clear “no.” But why can’t Christians participate in pagan celebrations? And what’s wrong with just a little bit of idolatry, anyway—whether its shopping, exercise, or self-improvement? Paul gives two reasons not to get involved in pagan worship (not to place anything else above God). First, verses 1-13 say that…

Idolatry

Why No Idolatry

# I. Idolatry reaps God’s discipline (1-13).

[God is serious about our associations and will change events to get us back on track.]

Map

Israel

## God judged Israel for its evil practices as a warning to us (1-11).

### These verses speak of the time when Israel was on the way from Egypt to Canaan.

vv1-4

### All the Israelites with Moses in the wilderness were incredibly blessed by God (1-4). Notice how many times the word “all” appears here in these four verses.

#### *All* Israel was guided by God’s cloud (1a).

Cloud

#### *All* were saved from drowning in the Red Sea by identifying with Moses (1b-2).

#### *All* Israel received nourishment in the desert from Christ (3-4).

##### *All* ate the manna miraculously provided from the sky (3; Ex. 16).

##### *All* drank the water miraculously provided by Christ from a rock (4; Ex. 17).

Leader

Food

Water

Sea

### Yet God still judged nearly all of them for their pagan practices (5-11).

#### Despite experiencing God’s blessings, the Israelites were still involved in pagan practices, earned His displeasure, and died in the desert (5). How many *was* God pleased with when 12 spies returned? Only two! The majority said the land was good but they are giants and we are grasshoppers. But two—Joshua and Caleb—two out of two million focused on God! Only 1 in a million pleased God!

Cancel

God

3G

Spies

v. 5

#### God judged the Israelites for their evil practices to warn us of His judgment for similar practices (6-11). Notice that the word “some” repeats—those judged!

Korah

V 9-11

V 6-8

Calf

##### When Korah rebelled against God by rebelling against Moses, God judged this evil by having the ground swallow them up (Num. 16).

##### God later judged their evil practices with poisonous snakes (Num. 21), but in His grace He still allowed them to be healed by looking at a bronze serpent.

Snakes

(So rather than getting ourselves into pagan celebrations or other forms of idolatry, what then *are* we supposed to do? Verses 12-13 tell us to…)

Black

## Humbly accept God’s help when tempted (12-13).

Humble

### This means to first guard yourself from pride (12).

V 12

#### Both Christians and non-Christians in the west used to shun idols. But the advent of American Idol has glamorized the whole idea! Now we are so blatant about it!

Man

Idols •

Woman

#### Did I say never watch the show? No, but we often lack a fear of situations that are spiritually deadly for us. We say, “Hey! I’m a believer in Christ. I’ll participate and *witness* for Him there. I won’t get caught up in their practices!” But before we know it, we’re sucked in due to our pride and self-sufficiency.

Black

#### The same can happen with our iPhone games. A little fun can absorb all our time.

#### The same happens with us adults. I remember one time when I was reading the newspaper, I hadn’t been watching the clock—and wow! An hour and a half had gone by with my guard down.

#### We need to guard ourselves from pride that can lead us into involvements that waste our time because we have an “Oh, I can handle it” attitude. So be humble.

### Also, take comfort that God won’t put you into a situation where you have to sin (13).

Black

v. 13

#### The imagery here is of an army trapped in the mountains with the enemy on the high ground about to swoop down and crush it. Yet in this impossible situation the army is able to escape through a pass. Morris, 144

#### Some of you Asians may think that, because of your family obligations, you *must* be involved in a Buddhist event—like you’re in a valley with pressure from every side and no escape. But God says otherwise here.

#### In his book *Growing Churches Singapore Style*, Keith Hinton notes that over one third of Christian converts in Singapore go back to Buddhism. This is partially due to pressure from parents who get the new Christian back into pagan practices.

#### Some are tempted to idolatry with so-called “management seminars” required at work, and you know it’s really a mask for new age teaching, trust God to give you a way of escape. This may be a pagan celebration to worship self—and God is faithful not to force you to be tempted here to the point where you must sin.

(What can happen if you don’t humbly accept God’s help when tempted? What if you brazenly go ahead and get involved in idolatry? This text says that…)

## God will judge you for your involvement in paganism. How?

### First, worship with pagans will cause you to miss God’s best. I used to interview applicants for principal at International Community School. I remember one applicant for principal—a man involved in worship with many pagan groups like the Masons, Armstrong’s Worldwide Church of God, Rosicrucian Fellowship, and metaphysic New Age groups. These pagan groups cooled his walk with God—and God’s judgment for him was missing the blessing of being involved in His service.

• Rosi

• Arm

• Mason

Black

• New

Pagan

### Idolatry often leads to sexual sin—and God judges sexual sins through diseases like sexually transmitted diseases (reminds me of v. 8).

STD

#### The Corinthians and other pagan peoples often worshiped their deities by “worship” with temple prostitutes! This kind of lifestyle brings inevitable results.

#### The sexually transmitted disease that has become the most common is a virus called human papillomavirus (HPV). A recent major study on HPV shows that 50% of sexually active US women between 18 and 22 are infected with HPV! (http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/articles/McIlhaneyAbstinenceCongress.php)

• HPV

#### Christians debate if disease is God’s judgment or the inevitable result of sin. Is there a difference?

Judged?

#### More than 10 years ago the HIV rate among homosexual men was as high as 40% like in Atlanta—most of which started at being at the wrong type of celebration.

Map

(So why should idolatry be a concern for us? First, Paul notes that God will judge us for this kind of involvement. Now, in verses 14-22 he shows *why* God is so serious about this issue…)

Black

# II. God judges our idolatry because it is demonic (14-22).

[Christians involved in pagan religious events worship demons and arouse God’s discipline.]

## Avoid idol feasts since they’re as demonic as the Lord’s Supper is godly (14-22).

Face

[Christian feasts and idol feasts are incompatible since idol feasts worship demons.]

### As an overall command Paul says to flee from idolatry (14). We shouldn’t try to see how close we can go, but how far we can fly!

v. 14

Body/Bloo

(Then we have a significant statement about the Lord’s Supper…)

### The Lord’s Supper is a corporate communion with Christ (15-18).

vv. 15-18

#### The concepts of eating and fellowship often go together in Scripture.

Eating

#### The Lord’s Supper is an experience of fellowship with Christ. The cup pictures our vertical fellowship with Christ while the bread pictures our horizontal unity with one another. That’s why we eat from a single loaf.

• Cup

• Bread

### But God says not to eat at a pagan feast since it is a communion with demons just as the Old Testament sacrifices were a communion with God (19-22).

vv. 19-22

#### Verse 18 refers to Leviticus 7—how the OT worshiper gave a fellowship offering. The lamb’s breast and right thigh belonged to the priests, but the rest of the meat had to be eaten that day. So the worshiper would invite his family and friends over to eat this communal meal as indication of his fellowship with God.

BBQ meat

Communal

Black

#### Just as an OT saint fellowshipped with God in the fellowship offering, those in pagan celebrations fellowship with demons! That’s exactly what verse 20 says!

(But what results from this kind of involvement? The point of the passage is simply that…)

## Exposing ourselves to demons in pagan celebrations invites God’s discipline.

Results

### A few years ago I received an invitation in the mail to a Buddhist feast. When I read it I thought, “Wow! I love vegetarian food! Besides, maybe I should go so I know what kind of things my students get invited to.” Then the Lord brought to my mind 1 Corinthians 10—that attending such a celebration is involving myself with demons!

Black

### If you eat at the Lord’s table and the table of demons, you’re asking God to judge you.

#### The Corinthians did this. In 11:29-30 Paul notes that a person who takes the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner “eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep (died).”

11:30-32

11:27-29

#### Besides sickness and death, other examples of God’s discipline include financial problems, relational challenges, etc. Not all of these are discipline, but many are.

#### Notice Paul *doesn’t* say to avoid these associations for fear of *demons*—what demons will do to you. Verse 22 says to avoid them out of a fear of *God*—what God Himself will do to believers who participate!

(So what Paul is saying in today’s passage is to…)

# Conclusion

### Avoid idolatry or God may discipline you for this involvement with demons (M.I.).

MI

### [God is a jealous God who wants us to worship Him alone—and if we don’t then He’ll discipline us through sickness, difficulty, and in extreme cases even death.]

### So what do we do? How can we not be idle with idols? First…

How?

#### Be humble (12)—don’t think you can attend what God prohibits and not fall.

• Humble

#### Trust in God’s faithfulness (13)—He won’t put you where you must fall.

• Trust

#### Flee every form of idolatry (v. 14).

• Flee

##### Give honor to Buddhists who die but don’t participate in the Buddhist funeral rites. In fact, talk about this with your parents and family members while they are still alive. Let them know that while you believe in honoring your parents, you do not believe in *worshipping* your parents.

##### Especially flee sexual idolatry.

• Good

Fire

#### Seek the good of others (23-30).

vv. 23-24

##### Once the elderly Chinese man died in the semi-D next to us. The family had a huge Buddhist commemoration, complete with an altar and food offered to his spirit. As their neighbors, we struggled with how we could show respect for the man and comfort to the family, given that a huge dinner was included.

Black

vv. 28-30

vv. 25-27

##### We decided that attending would be participation in Buddhism, so we went during the daytime when only the family was present to express our concern.

#### Glorify God (10:31–11:1).

10:31–11:1

• Good

##### Selfishness glorifies self. Selflessness glorifies God, so glorify God!

Black

##### Ask, “Will God be glorified (look good) by my decision in this area?”

True Way Presbyterian & Grace Baptist Church Dr. Rick Griffith

29 May 1994 & 6 December 1998 Message #13 of 24

NIV 35 Minutes

When You’re Idle About Idols

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**Topic:** Idolatry

**Subject:** Avoid pagan celebrations

**Complement:** or God may discipline you for this involvement with demons.

**Purpose:** The listeners will commit themselves to avoid all forms of idolatry.

# Introduction

### I don’t like smoke. Susan and I both come from California, but we can’t stand smog either. In southern California you wake up to the sweet sound of the birds coughing. We were glad to discover that Singapore has cleaner air now than it did 20 years ago.

Shortly after we came to Singapore in 1991, when we had only two young sons, one day we saw dozens of fires burning in front of homes, businesses, and public places. People burned huge piles of paper, fanning the flames as large billows of smoke poured into the air. Being Californians used to laws against public fires, we asked, “Why is all this burning allowed?”

Then someone told us about the hungry ghosts. I thought, “Ghosts? And *hungry* ghosts? Even if there *were* ghosts, would they really get *hungry*?”

One day after our family ate at Denny’s we saw a Chinese family next door in front of their paint and hardware storefront bringing out bags of paper. “Ah, the Hungry Ghost Festival!” we surmised as the sons laid two metal sheets on the parking lot in front of their business. Then they poured about seven huge garbage bags full of fake money on the metal sheets. Finally they topped off the meter high pile with several flags and ignited an inferno.

I went up to interview the mother. “Excuse me, can you tell me what you’re doing? I’m new and from America and haven’t seen this done before coming to Singapore.”

“Oh, we are celebrating the hungry ghost,” she replied hesitantly. Seemingly embarrassed about being a modern Chinese partaking in an old, Buddhist ritual, she added, “It’s just a Chinese custom.”

“So you believe ghosts get hungry?” I asked.

“Well, this paper money may help them buy food,” she replied. “The more paper money we burn, the more money the ghosts will have to buy food.”

“Who sells them food?” I asked.

“Well,” she said sheepishly, “Like I said, it’s just a Chinese custom. I don’t actually know if they get the money or not.”

“Now, is this ghost an ancestor of yours—like a relative who has passed away?”

“No, it’s just a ghost who helps our business prosper.” I sensed her uneasiness so I backed off. As an act of good will she gave our two young boys each a flag, which she translated as “celebrate the seven month.” Her daughters also delighted each of our boys with an orange from their Buddhist altar. A flag and an orange—the way to the hearts of preschoolers!

In a sober moment in the car I asked Susan, “Well, honey, how do you feel about eating food offered to idols?” (referring to the oranges). “Oh, boy,” she said, “I’ve read about this in 1 Corinthians but I never thought I would face this issue myself!”

At home we gathered around the garbage can in front of our house, explaining to the boys that we didn’t think Jesus would want these things in our home. Both boys cried as we threw their flags and oranges away. How sad to realize how many millions believe that offerings to a spirit without a name or identity may bring material prosperity, but *they have to feed this spirit*! How wonderful to know a God who *has* a name, who is *never* hungry, who provides for *us*, and who feeds *us* through His Word.

### What would you have done in this situation?

#### Would you have eaten the oranges, thanking God for saving you some money for food?

#### Or would you give them to a Buddhist neighbor?

#### Or would you have thrown them away like we did?

### How should we as Christians respond to this issue of food sacrificed to idols?

#### If a friend gives you meat or fruit from the family altar, would you eat it in your home?

#### Or is the meat in some way contaminated—so you wouldn’t eat it?

#### Would you eat it in your neighbor’s house?

#### Would you eat it in a Buddhist or Taoist or Hindu temple? Why or why not?

### Corinthian believers in the mid-first century also had questions about food offered to idols.

#### [Show picture.] Here’s a map of ancient downtown Corinth. Notice the three temples in blue and the numerous shops in red. Now pagan people paid for their temple services in the form of meat given to the pagan priests, and the priests could only eat so much meat, so these priests were good Chinese businessmen. They simply brought this idol meat across these courtyards to the shops—and sold it for “special price, lah”!

#### The Corinthian Christians disagreed on whether they should eat this food offered to idols. Some said, “Oh, it’s OK since idols aren’t really gods anyway” but others said, “Hey, I was saved out of that stuff. I’m going to stay away from it as far as I can!”

#### So they wrote the Apostle Paul about the issue and he answered it in 1 Corinthians 8—10. Let’s see what he had to say. Could you turn to 1 Corinthians 8 with me please?

### This will give us the proper context for today’s text.

#### Notice in 1 Corinthians 8:4 how Paul claims that there’s only one God, so idols are really only manmade objects [read v. 4].

#### But, jumping to verse 9, Paul says that if this offends someone we should give up this right to eat to show love in light of another’s weaker conscience.

#### And verse 10 notes that we shouldn’t claim a right to eat in an idol temple.

#### Then in chapter 9 Paul shares many of his rights he gave up for the sake of others.

### In chapter 10 Paul addresses eating idol food at a pagan celebration. Is it OK or not? Paul’s answer is a clear “no.” But why can’t Christians participate in pagan celebrations? Why not be idle about idols like the Corinthians? Paul gives two reasons not to involve ourselves in pagan worship. First, verses 1-13 say that…

# I. Involvement in pagan celebrations reaps God’s discipline (1-13).

[God is serious about our associations and will change events to get us back on track.]

## God judged Israel for its evil practices as a warning to us (1-11).

### All the Israelites with Moses in the wilderness were incredibly blessed by God (1-4). Notice how many times the word “all” appears here in these four verses.

#### *All* Israel was delivered from the sun’s heat and from drowning in the Red Sea due to their identification with Moses (1-2).

#### *All* Israel received nourishment in the desert from Christ (3-4).

##### *All* ate the manna miraculously provided from the sky (3; Ex. 16).

##### *All* drank the water miraculously brought forth by Christ from a rock (4; Ex. 17).

### Yet God still judged nearly all of them for their pagan practices (5-11).

#### Despite experiencing God’s blessings, the Israelites were still involved in pagan practices, earned His displeasure, and died in the desert (5). How many *was* God pleased with? Only two—Joshua and Caleb—two out of two million! Only one in a million Israelites pleased God!

#### God judged the Israelites for their evil practices to warn us of His judgment for similar practices (6-11).

##### When Korah rebelled against God by rebelling against Moses, God judged this evil by having the ground swallow them up (Num. 16).

##### God later judged their evil practices with poisonous snakes (Num. 21), but in His grace He still allowed them to be healed by looking at a bronze serpent.

(So rather than getting ourselves into pagan celebrations, what then *are* we supposed to do? Verses 12-13 tell us to…)

## Humbly accept God’s help when tempted (12-13).

### This means to first guard yourself from pride (12).

#### It used to be that both Christians and non-Christians shunned idols. But the advent of American Idol has glamorized the whole idea! Now we are so blatant about it!

#### Did I say never watch the show? No, but we often don’t have a righteous fear of situations that are spiritually deadly for us. We say, “Hey! I’m a believer in Christ. I’ll participate and *witness* for Him there. I won’t get caught up in their practices!” But before we know it, we’re sucked in due to our pride and self-sufficiency.

#### My sister-in-law once began working for a New Age chiropractor. She claimed to be a Christian, but she began attending some of the seminars he taught. She thought she was strong enough not to fall for this false theology, but soon she was attending all of the seminars—and then even teaching them and even marrying the man. Today she wants little to do with Jesus Christ or Christianity—even though this false religion lead to her divorce from her chiropractor husband in 1994!

#### We need to guard ourselves from pride which often can lead us into these pagan involvements with an “Oh, I can handle it” attitude. So be humble.

### Also, take comfort that God won’t put you into a situation where you have to sin (13).

#### The imagery here is of an army trapped in the mountains with the enemy on the high ground about to swoop down and crush it. Yet in this impossible situation the army is able to escape through a pass. Morris, 144

#### You may think that, because of your family obligations, you *must* be involved in a Buddhist event—like you’re in a valley with pressure from every side and no escape. But God says otherwise here.

#### In his book *Growing Churches Singapore Style*, Keith Hinton notes that over one third of Christian converts in Singapore revert back to Buddhism. This is partially due to pressure from parents who get the new Christian back into pagan practices.

#### So when that so-called “management seminar” is required of you at work, and you know that it’s really a mask for new age teaching, trust God to give you a way of escape. This is actually a pagan celebration—and God is faithful not to force you to be tempted in this situation to the point where you must sin.

(What can happen if you don’t humbly accept God’s help when tempted? What if you brazenly go ahead and get involved in pagan celebrations? This text says that…)

## God will judge us for our involvement in paganism.

### First, worship with pagans will cause you to miss God’s best. Many of you know that my children attend International Community School. This Christian school has resisted many attempts to dilute our message. I remember one applicant for principal—a man involved in worship with many pagan groups like the Masons, Rosicrucian Fellowship, Armstrong’s Worldwide Church of God, and metaphysic New Age groups. How little he spoke of Christ in his application! Why? He aligned himself with pagan groups that cooled his walk with God—and God’s judgment for him was missing the blessing of being involved in His service.

### God also judges sexual sins through diseases like AIDS (reminds me of v. 8).

#### The Corinthians and other pagan peoples often worshiped their deities by “worship” with temple prostitutes! This kind of lifestyle brings inevitable results.

#### A 1994 *Straits Times* article noted that over 50 million Americans have some type of sexually transmitted disease! Christians debate whether disease is a judgment from God or the inevitable result of sin. Is there a difference?

#### More than 10 years ago the HIV rate among homosexual men was as high as 40% like in Atlanta—mostly of which started at being at the wrong type of celebration.

(So why shouldn’t we be part of pagan celebrations? First, Paul notes that God will judge us for this kind of involvement. Now, in verses 14-22 he shows *why* God is so serious about this issue…)

# II. God judges our involvement in pagan worship because it is demonic (14-22).

[Christians involved in non-Christian religious events are participating with demons, which is sure to arouse God’s disciplining hand.]

## Avoid idol feasts since they’re as demonic as the Lord’s Supper is godly (14-22).

[Christian feasts and idol feasts are incompatible since idol feasts worship demons.]

### As an overall command he said to flee from idolatry (14). We shouldn’t try to see how close we can go, but how far we can fly! Robertson/Plummer

### The Lord’s Supper is a corporate communion with Christ (15-18).

#### The concepts of eating and fellowship often go together in Scripture.

#### The Lord’s Supper is an experience of fellowship with Christ. The cup pictures our vertical fellowship with Christ while the bread pictures our horizontal unity with one another. That’s why we eat from a single loaf.

### But God says not to eat at a pagan feast since it is a communion with demons just as the Old Testament sacrifices were a communion with God (19-22).

#### Leviticus 7 explains how the OT worshiper could offer what was called a fellowship offering. The lamb’s breast and right thigh belonged to the priests, but the rest of the meat had to be eaten that day. So the worshiper would invite his family and friends over to eat this communal meal, signifying fellowship with God.

#### Just as the OT saint fellowshipped with God in the fellowship offering, a participant in a pagan celebration fellowships with demons! That’s exactly what verse 20 says!

(But what results from this kind of involvement? The point of the passage is simply that…)

## Exposing ourselves to demons in pagan celebrations invites God’s discipline.

### A few years ago I received this invitation in the mail [read insert]. When I read it I thought, “Wow! I love vegetarian food! Besides, maybe I should go so I know what kind of things my students get invited to.” Then the Lord brought to my mind 1 Corinthians 10—that attending such a celebration is involving myself with demons!

### If you are involved both at the table of the Lord and the table of demons, you are asking God to judge you.

#### The Corinthians did just this. In 11:29 Paul notes that a person who takes the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner “eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep (died).”

#### Don’t believe this theology going around that attributes *every* sickness to sin, but don’t be fooled into thinking that *none* of it stems from sin either.

#### Besides sickness and death, there are examples of God’s disciplining hand: loss of job, financial problems, relationship challenges, etc.

#### Notice Paul *doesn’t* say to avoid these associations for fear of *demons*—what demons will do to you. Verse 22 says to avoid them out of a fear of *God*—what God Himself will do to believers who participate!

(So what Paul is saying in today’s passage is to…)

# Conclusion

### Avoid pagan celebrations or God may discipline you for this involvement with demons (Main Idea).

### [God is a jealous God who wants us to worship Him alone—and if we don’t then He’ll discipline us through sickness, difficulty, and in extreme cases even death itself.]

### So what do we do? How can we not be idle with idols? First…

#### Be humble (v. 12)—don’t think you can attend what God says *not* to attend and not fall.

#### Trust in God’s faithfulness (v. 13)—He won’t put you into a spot where you must fall.

#### Flee every form of idolatry (v. 14).

##### Give honor to Buddhists who die but don’t participate in the Buddhist funeral rites. In fact, talk about this with your parents and family members while they are still alive. Let them know that while you believe in honoring your parents, you do not believe in *worshipping* your parents.

##### Avoid eating food sacrificed to idols in any pagan celebration.

##### Know in advance what kind of Chinese New Year celebration you are asked to attend. Many families have a very secular celebration where no worship is involved. In these cases it is OK to attend, but when deities are invoked and you participate you are opening yourself up to God’s discipline like verse 22 states.

#### Seek the good of others (23-30).

##### In 1997 the elderly Chinese man died in the semi-D next to us. The family had an elaborate Buddhist commemoration at the park across the street, complete with the large altar and food offered to his spirit. As their neighbors, we struggled with how we could show respect for the man and comfort to the family, given that a huge dinner was included.

##### We decided that to attend the dinner would be participation in Buddhism, so we went during the daytime when only the family was present to express our concern.

#### Glorify God (10:31–11:1).

##### The key here is whether worship is involved. If the worship is not directed towards God, then it is demonic worship. Don’t glorify demons! Glorify God!

##### Ask, “Will God be glorified (made to look good) by my decision in this area?”

### Prayer

**Preliminary Questions**

**Verses Questions**

Context What did the author record just prior to this passage?

Purpose Why is this passage in the Bible?

Background What historical context helps us understand this passge?

1-5 What is the point of listing the various experiences Israel had?

2 What does it mean to be “baptised into Moses”? “Identified with”?

3-4 Why is the food, drink, and rock deemed “spiritual”?

5 Why wasn’t God pleased with the Israelites?

11 What is the “fulfillment of the ages”?

14 What is idolatry?

16 Is the “cup” that of the Lord’s table?

17 Is the “bread” that of the Lord’s table?

19-20 What’s the implied answer to Paul’s questions? Is there significance in an idol itself?

21 Why can’t believers be involved in idolatry? What’s the problem with this?

22 What kind of questions are these?

**Tentative Subject/Complement Statements**

Do not be involved in idolatry because God will discipline you if you are

**Illustrations**

1) In 1997 the elderly Chinese man died in the semi-D next to us. The family had an elaborate Buddhist commemoration at the park across the street, complete with the large altar and food offered to his spirit. As their neighbors, we struggled with how we could show respect for the man and comfort to the the family, given that a huge dinner was included.

2) We decided that to attend the dinner would be participation in Buddhism, so we went during the daytime when only the family was present to express our concern.

1) A friend of mine at Farrer Court was invited to a Hungry Ghost meal. Since this was the only time during the year when all the residents did something social together and he wanted to witness to them, he checked it out in advance. He discovered that two celebrations were actually sponsored—one secular and one where food was offered to deities and worship was given.

2) So he went to the secular one but not to the religious one—this enabled him to minister to others without involvement in pagan worship.

**Exegetical Outline**

Exegetical Idea: The reason the Corinthians should avoid an idol feast is because its demonic nature brings God’s judgment.

I. (1-13) The way the Corinthians can avoid being judged as Israel was for its evil practices is to humbly accept God’s warnings and help when tempted.

A. (1-5) God’s judgment fell upon nearly all the Israelites who had received God’s blessings.

1. (1-4) All Israelites with Moses in the wilderness had common blessings.

a. (1-2) All Israel was delivered from the sun’s heat and from drowning in the Red Sea due to their identification with Moses.

1) (1a) All had guidance by God through the cloud each day.

2) (1b) All were saved from the pursuing Egyptians at the Red Sea.

3) (2) God’s deliverance of Moses via the cloud and sea also saved all those identified with Moses.

b. (3-4) All Israel received nourishment in the desert from Christ.

1) (3) All ate the manna miraculously provided from the sky.

2) (4) All drank the water miraculously brought forth by Christ from a rock.

2. (5) Despite experiencing God’s blessings, the Israelites were still involved in pagan practices, earned His displeasure, and died in the desert.

B. (6-13) The way to escape the same judgment that Israel experienced for evil practices is to humbly accept God’s warnings and help when tempted.

1. (6-10) One purpose God judged the Israelites for their evil practices was to warn us of his judgment for similar practices.

a. (6-7) Idolatry was judged as an example to us.

b. (8) Sexual immorality was judged as an example to us.

c. (9) Testing God was judged as an example to us.

d. (10) Grumbling was judged as an example to us.

e. (11) Israel’s judgment in these incidents should warn us of like judgments.

2. (12-13) The way to escape God’s judgment for idolatry is to humbly accept God’s help when tempted.

a. (12) Judgment sometimes results from pride so believers should be humble.

b. (13) God never allows us to be tempted without an escape route.

II. (14-22) The reason the Corinthians should avoid an idol feast is because it is demonic in nature just as the Lord’s Supper is godly in nature.

A. (14) Flee from idolatry.

B. (15-17) The Lord’s Supper is a corporate communion with Christ.

1. (15-16a) The cup in the communion ceremony symbolizes believers’ forgiveness through Christ’s blood.

2. (16b-17) The bread in the communion ceremony symbolizes believers’ unity with those who are also partaking.

C. (18-22) God says not to eat at a pagan feast since it is a communion with demons just as the Old Testament sacrifices were a communion with God.

1. (18) Old Testament saints worshipped God when they sacrificed.

2. (19-20) Pagan idols are harmless in and of themselves but participation in idol feasts is prohibited since this constitutes worship of demons.

3. (21-22) We can’t worship both God and demons without tempting Him to judge us.

III. (10:23–11:1) The exception to the church’s freedom to eat all foods is if it hinders the good of others.

A. (23-24) The general principal for idol foods is freedom to eat but only if it doesn’t hurt others.

B. (25-26) Believers can eat all food since it is all created by God.

C. (27-30) But believers shouldn’t eat food even privately if it violates another’s conscience.

D. (10:31–11:1) Believers should glorify God by seeking the good of others as did Christ and Paul.

**Homiletical Exposition** (cyclical inductive form)

Question: Why can’t Christians participate in idolatry?

**I. Idolatry reaps God’s discipline (1-13).**

A. God judged Israel for its evil practices as a warning to us (1-11).

1. All the Israelites were incredibly blessed by God (1-4).

2. Yet God still judged nearly all of them for their pagan practices (5-11).

B. Humbly accept God’s help when tempted (12-13).

1. Guard yourself from pride (12).

2. Take comfort that God won’t put you into a situation where you have to sin (13).

C. God will judge you for your involvement in paganism.

1. Your fellowship with God will be cooled by worship with pagans (cf. Masons).

2. Sexual sins are being judged by God daily through diseases like AIDS (cf. v. 8).

**II. God judges our idolatry because it is demonic (14-22).**

A. Avoid idol feasts since they’re as demonic as the Lord’s Supper is godly (14-22).

1. The overall command is to flee from idolatry (14).

2. The Lord’s Supper is a corporate communion with Christ (15-17).

3. God says not to eat at a pagan feast since it is a communion with demons just as the Old Testament sacrifices were a communion with God (18-22).

B. Exposing ourselves to demons in pagan celebrations invites God’s discipline.

1. Corinthians who took the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner were judged (11:29-30).

2. God disciplines us in other ways besides sickness and death.

**Conclusion**

1. Avoid pagan celebrations or God may discipline you for this involvement with demons (Main Idea).

2. How not to be idle with idols:

a. Be humble (12).

b. Trust in God’s faithfulness (13).

c. Flee every form of idolatry (14).

d. Seek the good of others (23-30).

e. Glorify God (10:31–11:1).

**Introduction**

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**Conclusion**

1. Avoid idolatry or God may discipline you for this involvement with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Main Idea).

2. How not to be idle with idols:

a. Be humble (12).

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**Introduction**

Issue: Why can’t we as Christians participate in pagan celebrations?

**I. Involvement in pagan celebrations reaps God’s discipline (1-13).**

A. God judged Israel for its evil practices as a warning to us (1-11).

1. All the Israelites were incredibly blessed by God (1-4).

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1. Avoid idolatry or God may discipline you for this involvement with demons (Main Idea).

2. How not to be idle with idols:

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 **Rick Griffith**

3 February 2013

*Message 13 of 24 in “Becoming Who We Are” 1 Corinthians Series*

**When You’re Idle About Idols**

***1 Corinthians 10***

**Introduction**

Question: Why can’t Christians participate in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

**I. Idolatry reaps God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (1-13).**

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**II. God judges our idolatry because it is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (14-22).**

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b. Trust in God’s faithfulness (13).

c. Flee every form of idolatry (14).

d. Seek the good of others (23-30).

e. Glorify God (10:31–11:1).

**Thought Questions:**

1. Read 1 Corinthians 10 all the way through. List as many reasons as you can find that Paul gives to avoid pagan celebrations.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Verses** | **Reason** |
| 5 | It displeases God |
| 6 | It craves evil things |
| 7, 14 | It is idolatry |
| 8a | It leads to sexual immorality |
| 8b, 10 | It receives God’s discipline |
| 9 | It tests God |
| 10 | It leads to grumbling |
| 12 | It leads to pride and falling |
| 16-17 | It dishonors God at the Lord’s table |
| 18, 20-21 | It is a participation with demons |
| 22a | It arouses God’s jealousy |
| 22b | It challenges God’s power by us thinking we determine our destiny |
| 23-24 | It puts personal whim above what benefits others |

1. Share a time in your life when you had to make a choice regarding idolatry.

Invitation to a pagan exercise class (e.g., yoga)

Deepavali candy offered to idols passed to him to eat

Voting for someone only for personal benefit

Bowing down before one’s teacher as a god to worship

Having to choose between business or missionary career

1. What decision are you facing now in respect to pagan celebrations, food, or priorities?

“Unfriend” on Facebook the person chasing you

Text