

Holier Than Thou

Author: Jackie Hill Perry

Lesson Title: “Unholy gods: Idolatry” (pp. 50-64)

Session 4

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The main point of this lesson is: God’s holiness is missing from any idol we create for ourselves, rendering them useless.

Focus on this goal: To help adults search their lives for efforts to exchange idols for holy God

Key Bible Passage: Exodus 32:1-6

Before the Session

1. Write Exchange . . . at the top of one poster board and Good at the top of another. (Steps 1 and 5)

2. Obtain a cracked mug to take to class. (Step 6)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Request the group list typical exchanges people make. Write responses on the “Exchange . . .” poster. (Samples: Exchange . . . currencies; money for goods/services; contact information; sleep for watching TV; personal interaction for scrolling on phone; defective item for a whole one.) Determine which of these exchanges the group deems positive, negative, or neutral.

Write on the poster idols for holy God. Ask: Would you classify that a positive, negative, or neutral exchange? Why?

Read the main point of this lesson statement (p. 62) and draw attention to the lesson goal (p. 62).

Step 2. Self-Made gods

Discuss Day One, activity 1 (p. 50). Evaluate why “make us a god” is a contradictory statement. Use Day One remarks (pp. 50-51) to explore why a made god cannot be a holy God. Discuss: Why would they exchange a holy God who’d been leading them with a cloud by day and fire by night for a god made of rings they pulled out of their ears?

Request someone read Psalm 106:20-21. Explore how forgetting what God our Savior has done for us can result in exchanging the glory of God for a self-made god.

Note Isaiah the prophet emphasized the utter nonsense of that exchange. Invite a volunteer to read Isaiah 44:13-17. Discuss Day One, activity 2 (p. 51).

Step 3. A Foolish Exchange

Read the first, short paragraph of Day Two (p. 52). Determine ways people exchange the truths of God for lies. Explore how exchanging the truth of God’s transcendence for the lie that God is like us will always result in idolatry.

Consider what the author means by saying idols are local (p. 53). Invite two volunteers to read Isaiah 41:22-23 and 46:9-10. Ask: According to these passages, why is it foolish to exchange a transcendent God for a local god?

Discuss Day Two, activity 2 (p. 54).

Step 4. True Life from True Life

Inquire how Jesus is the ultimate example of the truth that no plan of God’s can be thwarted. Invite a volunteer to read Acts 4:27-28.

Request adults read Acts 4:12 and state why it’s foolish to exchange God’s truth revealed in Christ for any other god. Discuss Day Three, activity 1 (p. 55). Emphasize both idols and those who worship them are powerless, lifeless, ridiculous, useless.

Ask: What is the only way we can have life and why? Discuss the Day Three statement (p. 55), “It is the faith we give to an idol that gives it the life we hope it will give us in return.” Examine why that is a foolish exchange of faith.

Request someone read the last two sentences of Day Three (p. 56), beginning with “An idol’s lifelessness . . . .” Discuss Day Three, activity 2 (p. 56).

Step 5. Lowered Standards

Consider how people who worship idols exchange God’s moral law for lower standards. Discuss the Day Four Note (p. 57). Ask: What do idol worshipers hope to receive when they exchange standards? What do they receive instead?

Encourage participants to identify good things in life. Record responses on the “Good” poster. Cross out one “o” in “Good” and ask: How do we make good things gods?

Request adults silently consider Day Four, activity 1 (p. 58). Read all or portions of the last paragraph of Day Four (p. 58).

Step 6. Broken Cistern or Flowing Fountain

Request adults follow along in their Bibles as you read Jeremiah 2:13. Display the mug. Explore reasons we might continue to drink out of a cracked mug and problems in doing so.

Guide the group to compare idolatry with drinking from a cracked mug, using Day Five remarks (p. 59). Request adults look to Jeremiah 2:11-12 and state why God’s people abandoned the fountain of living waters for a broken cistern.

Note if an item we purchased is broken we will exchange it for a whole one. Evaluate how (and why) people make an opposite exchange when they worship idols rather than God. Declare: How foolish to exchange what is holy and wholly satisfying for what is broken, unholy, and will never satisfy. The good news is this holy God allows do-overs. We can make the right exchange.

Read the last paragraph of Day Five (p. 61).

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Request adults silently consider how they have exchanged idols for a holy God. Encourage them to make wise exchanges. Urge: Exchange your pride for repentance, your guilt for His grace, your shame for His salvation, your self-sufficiency for His all-sufficiency. Exchange what is broken for what is whole.

Invite participants who want to know more about turning from dead idols to the living God (Day Five, activity 2, p. 61) to speak with you after the session.

**Close in prayer.**

