



# REDISCOVERING OUR PLACE IN GOD'S STORY

## ♥ ACT 3 DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY

### DEVOTIONAL READING

“What happens when a society worships something that is not God? We ought to know: it’s happening all around us. But we don’t usually look at it like that. We live, perhaps, with the delusion that the Western world is either basically ‘Christian’; or we think of our society as simply neutral, an open forum where people can choose their own way forward without pressure from different quarters. We may happen to choose the Christian way; others are free to choose their own.

If pressed, we would probably agree that things aren’t as simple as the picture above. We know about ‘the hidden persuaders’; we recognize the insidious power of advertising, of media images, of role models; we know the pressures of popular culture, the desire to be the same (or a little bit better) than the people next door. And yet we fool ourselves that this is merely on the surface, and that underneath lies an ocean of freedom...

Idolatry begins when human beings treat something which is good as if it were God. Idolatry is not merely silly. The things to which human beings give mistaken allegiance are not, in and of themselves, bad. The evil consists in human misuse of creation, not in creation itself. In their proper place, [our idols] have a certain power. Nationhood enables human beings to engage in coherent and cohesive common life. Sexuality gives joy and delight, sustains the bond of husband and wife, and propagates the human race. But when these and other things are worshiped in the place of the Creator God, they attain a power out of proportion. Worship your nationhood, and you give nationalism power over you, and over those connected with you, which it should never have. Worship sexuality, and you become its slave, unable to resist its demands, even when they impinge on the freedom and happiness of others...

Western society likes feeling ten feet tall. Science and technology have done so much for us: we are better fed, better informed, better equipped, better housed, and better entertained than ever before. We are larger than life, and we like it that way. And who stands in the way of this dream continuing? Some of them live in our midst: the poor, the homeless, those who live in cardboard boxes. Most of us are content to carry on as though they weren’t there. Some of them live farther away, and we put them out of our minds: the third world peasant who works for a pittance to produce the tea that we buy at inflated prices; the small farmer in a remote village who is entirely controlled by the multinational companies that can put him out of business at the flick of a pen. There are other things that stand in our way: the rain forests that are turning brown under the steady drop of the acid rain from those same industries. There is a price to be paid for our idolatry. If we treat the world as a diamond mine, we are almost bound to treat it at the same time as a rubbish heap. There are sacrifices that we regularly offer on the altar of our materialistic neopaganism. And some of those sacrifices are human...

We must confront the idols on their own territory, and we must seek to establish the truths of which they are parodies, the true worship of which idol worship is a distorted image. We must search out the good that is there, and see that it is enhanced, not lost, in the process of abandoning idolatry. Jesus urged his contemporaries to repent and believe. ‘Come with me,’ he says, ‘and together we will face the powers of darkness and defeat them, not with their weapons but with the power of light. Give up your semi-pagan agendas for putting the world in order, and trust me; we will replace the love of power with the power of love.’”


From Tom Wright’s *Bringing The Church To The World*

## ACTIVITY

Spend some time prayerfully reflecting on the idols to which your heart is most drawn.


*Idolatrous Thinking: If I only had [                    ], then I would be happy.*

*Truth: I can find contentment in Christ by [                    ].*




*Idolatrous Thinking: If I lost [                    ], I would be devastated and might turn away from God.*

*Truth: God can meet me in my loss and grief, and He will provide comfort by [                    ].*




*Idolatrous Thinking: I am willing to make big sacrifices in terms of time, money, etc. to get [                    ].*

*Truth: Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice to set me free from idolatry. He is calling me to sacrifice [                    ] to serve Him and others.*



*Idolatrous Thinking: When things aren't going well, I turn to [                    ] for comfort, hope, or to escape.*

*Truth: God wants to provide comfort and strength through [                    ] as well as the following brothers or sisters in Christ: [                    ].*



*Idolatrous Thinking: I can't trust God if I am obedient to Him in these areas: [                    ].*

*Truth: God will honor my obedience. I know He has my best interests at heart because [                    ].*

## PRAYER

Merciful God, you pardon all who truly repent and turn to you. We humbly confess our sins and ask your mercy. We have not loved you with a pure heart, nor have we loved our neighbor as ourselves. We have not done justice, loved kindness, or walked humbly with you, our God. Have mercy on us, O God, in your loving-kindness. In your great compassion, cleanse us from our sin. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Do not cast us from your presence, or take your Holy Spirit from us. Restore to us the joy of your salvation and sustain us with your bountiful Spirit. Amen.