



WEEK 4

SERMON GUIDE



THE BIG IDEA

We defeat the god of obsession by shifting our attention.

THE BIBLE

Matthew 6:21-23; Exodus 20:1-3
I Corinthians 10:23; Matthew 22:37

WHAT?

WE'RE WRAPPING UP THIS SERIES

PROP | The Four Idols

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As you begin teaching, your four pillars and four idols should be in the same location as last week. The three idols should all be uncovered and visible. The final idol should be covered with a black tablecloth or cardboard box with question marks painted on its sides. For full details, check the instructional Prop PDF provided in your downloads for this week.

QUESTION | How many hours per day as the average teenager stare at a screen?

- Let's start today with a little pop quiz.
- Here are your options: A) 1-3 hours, B) 3-5 hours, C) 6-9 hours, D) 9+ hours.
- Give a few students a chance to respond. The correct answer is C.

QUESTION | Who spends more time in front of a screen: teenage guys or teenage girls?

- Give a few students a chance to respond. The correct answer is teenage guys, who spend at average of eight hours per day looking at a screen.

QUESTION | How many times does the average American (that includes your grandma) look at their phone in one day?

- Give a few students a chance to respond. The correct answer is 80 times each day.

QUESTION | Are you obsessed with your screen?

- Give me a show of hands. Yes? *Wait for students to raise their hands.* No? *Wait for students to raise their hands.*

SO WHAT?

OBSESSION IS ABOUT ATTENTION

- Maybe you don't like to think of your "dependency" on your phone as an obsession, but let's be honest. Our obsessions are simply the things that have our attention. They're the things we run to almost mindlessly. Compulsively. Obsessively. If that's the definition, I think just about everyone in this room might be addicted to a screen.

STORY | Talk about two things you used to be obsessed with.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Share two story about two things you used to be obsessed with. First, talk about something silly, like your favorite boy band, a video game, or pizza. Next, get a little vulnerable and talk about something you used to be obsessed with that was a little more destructive. Maybe it was a technology addiction, a food habit, or any other unhealthy compulsion. Talk about how that obsession eventually began to damage you, your life, and the people around you. If you're having trouble coming up with a story about your own life, feel free to share a story (respectfully) about someone you know whose life was torn apart by an addiction.*
- In both of those cases, my attention was taken up by an obsession. Sure, some obsessions can be relatively harmless. But what we might think are harmless habits one day often have the power to become dangerous addictions the next.

SCRIPTURE | Exodus 20:1-3

- For the last month, we've been referring back to this passage in Exodus to help us understand this idea of idolatry—the worship false gods, rather than the one true God. No, you're probably not literally worshiping the god of Baal, like some people did in the days the Bible was written, but you probably are worshiping one of these gods. *Gesture to the four idols.*
- Maybe you worship the god of me. Maybe you try to be the boss of your own life, but to a degree where it moves beyond a healthy desire for independence and into the idolatry of ourselves.
- Maybe you worship the god of stuff. Maybe your stuff has become so important to you that, instead of owning stuff, you've allowed your stuff to own you.
- Maybe you worship the god of worry. Maybe you allow yourself to focus so much on what you don't have or what you might lose that you've allowed your worries to become to boss of your life.
- Or maybe, like we're talking about today, you worship the god of your obsessions. *Reveal the fourth idol.* Maybe there's an obsession or two in your life that has gone beyond a simple harmless habit to the point where that obsession is now in charge.

- Whatever gods we've been worshiping (and, if we're honest, it's probably all four), here was God's message to His people thousands of years ago that still rings true today . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Exodus 20:1-3.*

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 6:21-23

- I think Jesus understands just how powerful our obsessions can be. Last week, we read a portion of what I would consider to be one of the greatest sermons ever preached: The Sermon on the Mount. I want to go back to that passage today.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 6:21-23.*
- Has anyone ever heard that children's song? It goes, "Be careful little eyes what you see. Be careful little ears what you hear." That's what I think of when I read these verses. Be careful what you focus on. Be careful what you let into your life. Wherever your eyes go, your entire body follows. Wherever your treasure is, your heart will be also.
- Think about where your focus has been lately. What have you been looking at? What have you been thinking about? What have you been listening to? What do you invest an unhealthy amount of time doing? I'm not asking these questions because I want you to feel ashamed. I'm asking because I want you to be self-aware.
- What we focus on has the ability to influence the direction of our entire bodies and minds. And that's a big deal.
- Whether it's video games, social media, pornography, sex, alcohol, drugs, your phone, food, that person you really like, or whatever else I haven't thought to mention, here's the point: our biggest, most destructive obsessions always started somewhere small. But with time and continued attention, they grow and grow and grow.
- We may think we're the boss of our own actions, but when we begin to focus large amounts of time and attention on something, it can quickly become an obsession. And when that "something" becomes an obsession, we're no longer in charge—the obsession is.

SCRIPTURE | I Corinthians 10:23

- There was a man named Paul who wrote most of what we know today as the New Testament (that's the second part of the Bible—the part that was written about Jesus and what happened after He showed up). Paul was incredibly smart, influential, respected, and passionate about following Jesus and spreading the Good News of Jesus all over the world. Throughout his ministry, he wrote a lot of letters to other believers and members of the early church to encourage them, guide them, and teach them as they learned how to follow Jesus.
- One of the things Paul wrote about often was the idea of freedom. He wanted followers of Jesus to understand that they were free from the old laws. They didn't need to do anything special to earn God's love or join the Jesus movement. Jesus came to give us freedom! That's good news!
- But Paul also had to help these early Jesus followers realize that just because you *could* do certain things doesn't mean that you *should* actually do them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read I Corinthians 10:23.*
- So you know those things you're obsessed with or possibly even addicted to? They won't stop you from being loved by God or being welcomed into His family. There are no entrance fees or applications when it comes to following Jesus. But just because you can doesn't mean you should.

- Your obsessions will never keep you from the love of Jesus, but they will keep you from experiencing the full and abundant life God has planned for you. That's not a punishment. It's just a natural consequence.
- Sure, you're allowed to listen to Cardi B on repeat for 20 hours a day . . . but should you?
- Of course you're allowed to be a little obsessed with that guy or girl you like so much . . . but is it beneficial?
- Even that obsession you'd prefer no one knew about—the one you may not talk out loud, but you're thinking about it—that habit, obsession, or addiction will never disqualify you from God's love. But it's not the life He wants for you.

NOW WHAT?

WE CAN DEFEAT THE GOD OF OBSESSION

- *Pick up and hold the "god of obsession" idol as you close.*
- So what do you do if you fear you've been worshipping the god of obsession?
- **We defeat the god of obsession when we shift our attention.** It's that simple, and that difficult.
- If you want to defeat your obsessions, shift your attention to Jesus.

IMAGE | Show the image provided in your downloads.

- It's kind of like this (very creepy) optical illusion.
- Maybe at first you saw a cat, but if you shift your attention just a little bit, you can see something else entirely.
- If your obsessions have become the boss of you, remember—you are still the boss of your own attention. You get to choose where you will place your attention and focus.

PRAYER

- Close your eyes for a moment.
- With everyone's eyes closed, I want to say one more thing about obsession. Some obsessions are more than obsessions. Some are addictions. If your obsession is hurting you, hurting others, or you've tried and you just can't defeat it, ask for help. We are with you, we are for you, and we are here to help. If that's you, and you want to talk with me or one of our adult leaders, wave at me right now. Thanks for your courage.
- As we close, let's practice shifting our attention. Right now, I want to challenge you to join me as we pray. But don't just listen or let your mind wander. Be fully present. Focus on the words I'm saying or say your own. Let's shift our attention away from ourselves, from our surroundings, and from our obsessions and shift it toward God. Let's pray.