

Introduction: *Engage your group by stimulating their thinking.*

As your group class members enter, have this statement written on the board:

Idolatry is huge in the Bible, dominant in our personal lives, and irrelevant in our mistaken estimations.

Divide the larger group into two groups and give them a couple of minutes to discuss the quote together. Ask each group to share with the rest of the class.

{Source: Os Guinness, “Os Guinness quotes,” AZ Quotes [online], [17 August 2016]. Available from the Internet: <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/1249104>.}

Part 1: *Help your group understand the major theme through a New Testament example.*

God deserves our loyalty. Ask a student to read the following article:

“If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.”

–2 Corinthians 11:30

By one estimate, more than 14 trillion frequent-flyer miles have been accumulated by people worldwide. It all started in the early 1980s, when airlines began the first frequent-flyer programs to encourage repeat business by rewarding customers for their loyalty. Accumulated miles could be redeemed for free travel, goods, and services, so it wasn't long before people began planning their travel based as much on personal reward as on price or schedule.

The apostle Paul was an avid first-century traveler, but he wasn't in it for the “frequent-sailor miles.” His goal was to reach as many people as he could with the good news of forgiveness and eternal life through faith in Jesus. When some people in the city of Corinth questioned his authority, he wrote a letter describing the price he had paid to bring the gospel to others: “Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep” (2 Cor. 11:25). God gave Paul the grace and endurance to risk his life to tell people about Jesus with no thought of personal gain.

Whether we receive persecution or praise for our service to the Lord, may our focus always be loyalty to Him and gratitude for His sacrifice of love.

*I am Yours, Lord, yet teach me all it means,
All it involves of love and loyalty,
Of holy service, full and glad,
In unreserved obedience to Thee! —Bennett*

Our loyalty to Jesus grows from His love for us.

Have your students give their reactions to the article. If you are not receiving any responses, start with the question, “*What is your reaction when people take God’s name in vain? Why?*”

{Source: David McCasland, “True Loyalty,” Our Daily Bread [online], 15 July 2014 [17 August 2016]. Available from the Internet: <http://odb.org/2014/07/15/true-loyalty/>.}

Part 2: Help your group members connect with the major theme through introspection.

Give each group member a piece of paper and pen. Allow five minutes to list every way the true God is different from false gods. For example, “The true God hears and answers prayers; false gods cannot.” Lead each group member to share one answer with the rest of the class.

Part 3: Check for understanding using “Think-Pair-Share.”

Play the song “Awesome God” by Michael W. Smith (3 minutes, 30 seconds). It can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PP9BjKnDaFk>.

Before you play it, ask your class to pay attention to the lyrics and, when the song is finished, instruct them to give reasons why God is “awesome” and why He alone deserves glory.

Say something like the following: “**Think** for 30 seconds about this statement. Now I want you to discuss this in **pairs** with a person on your left or right who is not your spouse.” Pause for 60 seconds. Call on 3-4 pairs to **share** one idea from their discussion.

Conclusion: *Challenge your students to live the lesson.*

God deserves our undivided love and worship. Ask your group members or students to think about this statement by Kyle Idleman: “Idolatry isn’t an issue, it is the issue... There are a hundred million different symptoms, but the issue is always idolatry.” Give the group the assignment of analyzing their lives to see if any idols have crept in. If they identify any, ask them to confess and forsake them and give God His due.

[Source: Kyle Idleman, *Gods At War: Defeating the Idols That Battle for Your Heart* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 22.]

Teaching Tip of the Week

Classroom discussion is particularly good at revealing students’ attitudes. The questions presented by the teacher as a stimulus for discussion should frequently focus on students’ emotional predisposition or values. For example, you might ask, “Are you or are you not in favor of homosexual marriage, and how did you arrive at your position?”

Whether they participate in the discussion or not, group members will be more aware of their own attitudes and values by comparing them with the values and attitudes of others. When they have strong and differing opinions about concepts, it is relatively easy to bring these out in discussion. Then we should point our students to the one and only infallible source of truth, the Bible, and have them evaluate their presuppositions in light of it.