

Gospel Centered Discipleship - Panel

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Summary

This discussion focused on the importance of gospel-centered discipleship and avoiding counterfeit approaches that emphasize behavior modification over heart transformation. The conversation explored four common idols or sources of identity that divert people from finding their worth in Christ: approval, power, security/control, and comfort. Practical strategies were shared for helping students identify their idols, preach the gospel to themselves, and make amends with those they have wronged as a result of their idolatry. The overall emphasis was on cultivating a culture of gospel-centeredness and equipping students to find their identity in Jesus rather than lesser idols.

Main Points

#1 - Identifying Counterfeit Discipleship

The discussion began by acknowledging that while discipleship should inherently focus on the gospel, it's easy for churches and youth ministries to veer off course. One counterfeit approach is an emphasis on behavior modification, where the focus is on getting students to act and look like good Christians without addressing the heart issue of falling in love with Jesus.

#2 - Understanding Idolatry

The concept of idolatry was unpacked, with the recognition that all of humanity is seeking identity and a sense of value and worth. The biblical narrative presents God as the source of true identity, while idols are lesser things people look to for a counterfeit sense of worth. Four main idols or sources of identity were identified: approval, power, security/control, and comfort.

#3 - The Approval Idol

The approval idol refers to finding one's identity in what others think and whether they approve. Social media has amplified this idol, with metrics like likes, followers, and comments feeding into a desire for approval and validation. This idol is particularly prevalent among students and can contribute to issues like depression, anxiety, and low self-worth.

#4 - The Power Idol

The power idol involves finding identity in having authority over others. This can manifest in various ways, such as a desire for positions of leadership or control, or through behaviors like violence and aggression (as seen in certain trends in pornography consumption).

#5 - The Security/Control Idol

The security or control idol is rooted in a desire for everything to go according to plan and a sense of having control over one's circumstances. For students, this can manifest as anxiety, depression, or a tendency to try to manipulate situations or relationships in an attempt to regain a sense of control.

#6 - The Comfort Idol

The comfort idol involves avoiding pain or difficult circumstances at all costs. This can lead to escapist behaviors like excessive media consumption, substance abuse, or unhealthy relationships, as individuals seek to numb or distract themselves from the discomfort in their lives.

#7 - Addressing Idolatry Through the Gospel

To address idolatry, a three-step process was outlined:

- 1) Look in: Help students identify the specific idol they are looking to for identity and worth.
- 2) Look up: Preach the gospel to their hearts, reminding them of their true identity in Christ.

- 3) Look out: If they have wronged others as a result of their idolatry, encourage them to make amends and demonstrate love within the community.

Next Steps

- Create a consistent language and culture around the concept of idolatry within the youth ministry, helping students recognize their own idols and the ways they seek identity apart from Christ.
- Equip students to preach the gospel to themselves, reminding them of their true identity and worth in Christ.
- Encourage students to take responsibility for any wrongs committed against others as a result of their idolatry, and to make amends as an expression of love within the community.
- Model vulnerability and transparency as leaders by openly discussing personal struggles with idolatry and the need to continually preach the gospel to one's own heart.