
The Golden Idol of Entertainment



Imagine Jesus is visiting your city today? He's recognizable and you know without a doubt He is Jesus. As He is walking along, He stops among believers in line at the box office. They've already seen *Top Gun*, *Downton Abbey*, and *Elvis*. Like those movies, this one has a few morality issues and misuses God's name—but hey, it's not "woke."

Jesus should love the special effects, entertaining story lines, and music . . . but would He? Seriously, was Jesus crucified for sins so that He could be entertained by them? Are we saved by Jesus' death so we can be entertained by immorality?

Would Jesus *really* sit through a movie blaspheming His Father's name?

Yes, these are rhetorical questions, and I am trying to make a point. It hurts my heart to hear God's name misused and it's disturbing to see Christians promoting movies through social media that don't honor Him. When God is not honored, the Holy Spirit is grieved, and His power is quenched.

This subject has been on my mind for a long time but recently felt called to talk about it. While thinking about it, I was reading a familiar story from the book of Daniel—hence, the title, *The Golden Idol of Entertainment*.

About 590 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made a large golden image, 90 feet high and 9 feet wide.

Whenever the Babylonians or any of their captives heard certain music, they were to fall down and worship the image. We do not know whether this enormous image was of the king himself, but the king used it as a test of loyalty to him. Whoever didn't fall down and worship the golden image was to be thrown into a blazing furnace (see Daniel 3: 4-6).

For the dedication of the golden image, King Nebuchadnezzar summoned all his officials, including three Israelites—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They had been trained and given positions of authority after the tribe of Judah was defeated and captured by the Babylonians.

The three Israelites followed the one true and living God and His Word. Presented with this golden image and the king's command, the three men now had a choice. They could continue to follow God, or they

could follow the king. God's first two of His ten commandments decree that we have no gods beside Him and no idols (or image) to worship.

When Jesus came to earth centuries later, He had a similar choice and similar temptation.

The devil wanted Jesus to worship him. This too would break God's directives. This was Jesus' response:

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only'" (Matthew 4:10).

As Christians, we follow the one true and living God through His Son, Jesus Christ. We may not think we're in any danger of idol or devil worship, but we should take time to examine our hearts and minds. After telling believers to set their minds on heavenly things and not on earthly things, the apostle Paul listed idolatrous activities (Colossians 3:1–5).

Impurity lands on the list as idolatry (v. 5). The Greek word translated impurity in certain English versions means worthless material, filth, dirt, waste, and immorality. What is the opposite of impurity? Purity—worthy material, pristine, clean, essential, and moral.

Who is the biggest purveyor of worthless material, filth, and immorality?

My answer is the film industry, also known as Hollywood. Films form the golden idol of entertainment and can hypnotize people in ways far more subtle and dangerous than Nebuchadnezzar's oversized golden idol ever could.

Have you ever noticed how often the Lord's name is misused in the majority of Hollywood or streaming films? We misuse God's name when we treat it profanely, irreverently, or lightly. This includes

misusing Jesus' name. Remember, when the world ends—*at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, and every voice confess Jesus is Lord* (Philippians 2:9–11).

The third commandment states, *“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name* (Exodus 20:7).

For the sake of entertainment, would we listen or watch the Lord's name being misused?

Hollywood has worked hard to change America's Christian worldview to an atheistic worldview for more than 60 years. In 1968 the movie industry dropped the Hays Code, which had prohibited profanity, graphic or realistic violence, sexual persuasions, and rape. The industry replaced it with an age-based rating. Some believe movies began deteriorating in the early 1960s.

Even some professing Christians accept Hollywood's lies about all Christians being hypocrites, living together outside of marriage, approving abortion, having gender confusion and ambivalence—and the list goes on. The devil is the cunning liar behind the scenes, and we must be careful. Let's not compromise our faith and witness one iota.

We can also compromise with the world when we say: *I won't do any of the wicked things the film is promoting. Therefore, it's all right to watch it.* Or we watch at home on video or streaming. We tell ourselves: *Well, there's just one or two objectional things in the movie, so it's okay. I fast forward or don't look or listen to those parts. I need to stay current so I can engage with people.*

Instead, we should consider how we're using our bodies—our eyes to watch and our ears to hear. In view of God's mercy, we should be offering our whole bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1–2). This is

our true and proper worship—not worshipping the golden idol of entertainment. Plus, why would we want to support an industry that is blatantly anti-God, anti-Christian, and anti-morality.

Remember the Scripture’s advice to keep our minds on “whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8).

That is how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego lived while in exile along with their friend, Daniel. They kept their eyes on God and His commandments. They wouldn’t bow down to the golden image and told King Nebuchadnezzar that they didn’t need to defend themselves. They said,

“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. ¹⁸But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Daniel 3:17–18

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn’t compromise with their faith. They were thrown into the blazing furnace. But not even a hair on their heads was singed. Immediately, King Nebuchadnezzar recognized that God had saved them, and he decreed that any people saying anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces. But even if God had not chosen to save them, God would still be the Ruler of the Universe and their reward or honor would await them in heaven.

God says, *“Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained”*
(1 Samuel 2:30c)

Lord God, keep us holy. May we give up the golden idol of entertainment and honor You with our very lives. Amen.

Want to Know More?

What is our danger in keeping God’s commandments? Death? Maybe we’re just afraid of being branded a radical or a weak Christian, being rejected by peers, or criticized. By the way, Romans 14 addresses Christian liberty in using God’s “good” gifts. It’s not a license to disobey God’s Word and commandments. It’s continually misused to give people the liberty to follow their own desires and not Jesus.

Plugged-In: Christian Movie Reviews by Focus on the Family
The review tells how many times the Lord’s name is misused, along with its sexual and violent content.

<https://www.pluggedin.com/movies/>

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/christian-what-are-you-watching/>

Ideas for replacing entertainment idols: Pray, make a list of friends or relatives to call and encourage, read Christian literature—fiction and nonfiction, study God’s Word, walk, exercise, engage in a sport, take online classes, keep a journal, write, invite people over or go out for coffee, start a part-time ministry, volunteer at a ministry, cook, bake, babysit for families, go out and share the gospel.

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