

TACTICS

> WINNING THE BATTLE FOR TRUTH <
— IN AN AGE OF DECEPTION —

A 13-WEEK DEVOTIONAL FIELD GUIDE



RECOGNIZE DECEPTION. | THINK BIBLICALLY. | STAND CONFIDENTLY. | LIVE ON MISSION.

★
ROCKFISH CHURCH RESOURCE

TACTICS: WEEK 7

THE RIVAL



*Whatever captures your heart will
eventually direct your life.*

MISSION BRIEF

Idolatry is not merely bowing before carved images. It is giving anything or anyone the place in our hearts that belongs to God alone.

TRAINING OBJECTIVE

To equip every believer to identify modern idols, understand why they compete for our worship, and intentionally re-center their lives around Christ.

Read: Matthew 6:19-24

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

REMEMBER

What receives my greatest emotional investment?

Week Seven Battle Rhythm:

Day	Focus	Question
1	Objective + Tactics	Identify the rivals.
2	Terrain	Recognize the power I've given to idols.
3	Training	Determine what is shaping my life.
4	Rules of Engagement	Separate meaningful promises from those which are empty.
5	Unit Cohesion + Mission	Lead others to an understanding of true worship.

Matthew 6:21 (ESV)

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

DAY 1 | REMEMBER: *What Did We Learn?*

OBJECTIVE

RECONNECT

God created us to worship. The question is not “*Will you worship?*” but “*What will you worship?*” In other words, what receives our greatest affection shapes our decisions, priorities, relationships, and future.

Worship extends beyond church; it is revealed by what consistently holds our attention and emotional investment.

Our hearts are always directed toward something.

Idolatry needs no statue; it may be success, money, comfort, family, approval, or even a good gift from God.

The issue is not what we have, but what holds first place.

Are our hearts directed toward Christ—or toward something that has taken His place?

TACTICS

The enemy **keeps us busy with whatever competes with God for the throne of our hearts.**

REFOCUS

Romans 12:1b (ESV)

¹ ...present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

The issue is not what we have. It's what has first place.

RESPOND

AFTER ACTION REVIEW:

- What consistently captures my attention?
- What receives the best of my emotional energy?
- What do I naturally think about when my mind is free?
- What does my time reveal about what matters most to me?

ACTION STEP / DAILY CHALLENGE:

Don't try to change anything yet. Simply notice what has your heart today.

1. What do I think about when my mind is free to wander?

2. What am I most afraid of losing?

3. What do I believe I need in order to be okay?

4. What disappointments affect me more deeply than they probably should?

5. What do I daydream about having, becoming, proving, or experiencing?

6. Whose approval matters most to me?

RETURN

God, help me remember that my life will follow what captures my heart. Show me where my affection and attention are being directed. Help me place You back at the center of my life. Amen.

DAY 2 | EXAMINE: *What Does This Reveal?*

TERRAIN

RECONNECT

Few believers consciously reject God. The danger is much quieter. Something else simply becomes more important. Modern idols can even look **respectable**: *success, career, comfort, family, money, politics, technology, approval, control, and entertainment*.

The problem is not necessarily that these things exist in our lives. Many are good gifts. The problem comes when a good gift becomes a rival.

Success becomes a rival when my worth depends on achievement.

Approval becomes a rival when other people's opinions determine my identity.

Control becomes a rival when trusting God becomes harder than managing everything myself.

An idol doesn't have to tell us to stop believing in God.

It simply has to convince us that something else needs to come first.

Something doesn't have to be bad to become an idol.

It simply has to become first.

REFOCUS

Exodus 20:3 (ESV) ³You shall have no other gods before me.

***Modern idols don't ask to be worshiped;
they simply ask to come first.***

RESPOND

AFTER ACTION REVIEW

Examine: *What Have I Misunderstood?*

Perhaps I've thought: *"An idol is something obviously sinful."*

But the Bible challenges that definition.

An idol can be something I genuinely value and even thank God for—yet still allow to occupy the place that belongs to God alone.

Ask yourself honestly:

- What would be hardest for me to give up?
- What am I afraid to lose?
- What most easily controls my emotions?
- Where do I look for security?
- Where do I look for significance?
- Where do I look for approval?
- What might I be putting ahead of God without realizing it?

ACTION STEP / DAILY CHALLENGE

Identify one possible rival.

Write it down.

Don't run down a rabbit trail trying to fix everything. Just identify the one thing that may be asking to come first.

Today I realized I put _____ before God.

It would be difficult for me to set aside _____ .

I find significance in _____ .

RETURN

Jesus, search my heart. Show me the things I have allowed to become more important than You. Give me the courage to recognize even the respectable things that have quietly moved into first place. Amen.

DAY 3 | PRACTICE: *What Needs To Change?*

EQUIPMENT

RECONNECT

READ: Psalms 115

Worship doesn't just reveal what we value. Worship changes us.

Psalm 115 describes idols as powerless and then gives a sobering picture: those who worship them become like them.

What we repeatedly devote ourselves to shapes who we are becoming.

When approval becomes our god, other people begin to control our identity.

When success becomes our god, our worth rises and falls with our achievements.

But when Christ is our treasure, He shapes us to become more like Him.

This means the answer isn't simply, *"Stop doing that."*

The deeper question is: *"What am I going to give my heart to instead?"*

The Bible makes this especially clear: We don't overcome idols merely by removing them. We overcome idols by treasuring Christ more, and moving from knowing of Christ, to knowing about Him.

REFOCUS

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

You become like the thing you worship.

RESPOND

AFTER ACTION REVIEW:

What should change today?

Look at the rival you identified yesterday.

Then ask:

“What kind of person is this pursuit making me?”

Is it making me:

- more anxious?
- more controlling?
- more self-focused?
- more dependent on approval?
- more distracted?
- more dissatisfied?

Or is it helping me become more like Christ?

ACTION STEP:

Don't attempt to change your entire life in one day. Choose one practice that redirects your heart toward Christ. For example:

- Replace some entertainment time with Scripture.
- Replace seeking approval with prayer.
- Replace control with surrender.
- Replace pursuing recognition with serving someone.
- Replace distraction with intentional time with God.

The goal isn't simply to remove the rival. The goal is to treasure Christ more.

RETURN

Jesus, I want my worship to make me more like You. Show me one habit that is shaping my heart in the wrong direction. Help me replace it with something that draws me closer to You. Amen.

***Worship doesn't just reveal what we value.
Worship changes us.***

DAY 4 | *How Does This affect me and the [people around me?]*

KINGDOM MISSION

RECONNECT

Every idol makes a promise.

"If you have enough money, you'll be secure."

"If people admire you, you'll know you're valuable."

"If you finally succeed, you'll be satisfied."

"If you achieve this goal, you'll finally be enough."

But idols are cruel masters. They never say, "Enough."

They continually demand more time, attention, affection, and sacrifice.

That's why this isn't merely a personal issue.

What consumes us eventually affects the people closest to us.

Our **family** experiences what controls our hearts.

Our **relationships** experience what controls our priorities.

Our **children, friends, coworkers, and neighbors** can see what we are living for even when we never say it out loud.

REFOCUS

Jonah 2:8 (NIV) Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them.

Jeremiah 2:13 (NIV) My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

Every idol makes a promise.

RESPOND

AFTER ACTION REVIEW:

Consider the rival you've been examining this week.

What is it promising you? What do you hope it will give you?

Security? Significance? Acceptance? Control? Comfort? Success?

Now ask:

Has it actually delivered what it promised?

In My Family

- How does this pursuit affect the way I interact with my family?
- Does it get my best attention or my leftovers?
- Is it creating freedom or consuming me?

In My Life

- What is this rival costing me?
- What does it demand from me?
- Where am I continually chasing “more”?

Personally

What am I expecting from this idol that only Christ can ultimately provide?

The message reminds us that every idol is ultimately a misplaced search for something only Christ can provide.

ACTION STEP / DAILY CHALLENGE:

Look beyond yourself.

Notice one way your pursuit of the rival affects someone you love.

Then choose one action that puts Christ and that relationship ahead of the rival.

RETURN

Father, help me recognize the promises that compete with Your promises. Show me where I am looking for life, security, identity, or satisfaction somewhere other than You. Help my worship of You produce life in my relationships rather than allowing a rival to consume me. Amen.

Idols promise life but ultimately consume it.

DAY 5 | MULTIPLY: *Who Else Needs This?*

UNIT COHESION

RECONNECT

We began the week by remembering that what captures our hearts eventually directs our lives. We examined what might be competing for first place. We practiced replacing a rival with something that draws us toward Christ. We considered how our worship affects the people around us. Now we bring the truth into the rest of our lives.

Worship is surrender.

It's not simply singing on Sunday. It's yielding our lives to God every day. And the antidote to idolatry isn't simply trying harder to remove everything competing for our attention. It is loving Christ more deeply. This brings us to an important question... *Who else needs this truth?*

Jesus doesn't simply call us to recognize idols in our own lives. As disciples, we're called to help others follow Him too.

REFOCUS

Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Worship is not what you do on Sunday; it's what you live for daily.

RESPOND

BATTLEFIELD ASSESSMENT (What Is This Producing in Me?)

Don't try to fix anything yet. Just pay attention.

Think about the rival you've been considering—success, approval, comfort, control, security, recognition, or something else that has quietly gained influence.

Ask yourself:

- When this is threatened, what happens in me?
- What emotions does it regularly produce?
- What choices does it influence?
- What does it make me afraid of?
- What does it cause me to pursue, protect, or avoid?
- What has it promised me?
- Is it actually delivering what it promised?
- What kind of person am I becoming when this has my heart?

Then ask one final question: *"Is this producing the kind of life Jesus said came to give me?"*

ACTION STEP / DAILY CHALLENGE:

Let What God Is Showing You Become Encouragement.

Think about someone you know who may be wrestling with a similar desire or pressure.

You don't need to diagnose them.

You don't need to identify their idol for them.

And you certainly don't need to give them a lecture.

Instead, consider sharing what God has been showing you.

RETURN

Jesus, let my worship shape every part of my life. Show me someone to encourage, and help my life lead others to treasure You more. Amen.

Worship is surrender.
