

Arlington: False gods and idolatry not confined to the past

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The idea of people worshipping idols always seemed archaic to me. I thought it doesn't actually happen anymore.

In a contemporary context, idols could only mean money, or television, or Facebook, or your boyfriend. "An idol is anything you worship more than God"—that was the definition I knew.

But since coming to UT Arlington and meeting people from faraway countries with religions drastically different from my own, I realized the literal worship of manmade objects is a current practice.

Two Indian students, new to UTA, came to our weekly Bible study Tuesday night. We split into smaller groups, and one of the Indian students ended up in my group. I have stopped automatically assuming every Indian student is Muslim or Hindu, since last semester I met several Christian Indians who are strong in their faith.

As we studied 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, the student enthusiastically nodded his head and wrote notes on his paper as we discussed the passage. "Maybe he's a believer?" I wondered. The passage centers on sincere faith evidenced in multiplying disciples. Genuine faith also is expressed in a turning from one's former life before knowing Christ, to a new way of living.

Turning from idols

"For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and

true God.” (1 Thessalonians 1:9)

My new friend’s head popped up when we came to this verse. He looked at me, quizzical, but still said nothing.

At the end of the study, I asked for prayer requests. He spoke up, saying: “I’m new to this—to the Bible. I have many questions. I am a Hindu, and today is a festival where we are required to attend some kind of religious service. It doesn’t matter what religion. So, when I received your card, (which we distributed on campus the first two days of school to promote weekly worship and Bible study), I came. I have really enjoyed it. Perhaps I will come back next week.” He then asked several questions on the authority and authenticity of Scripture.

He didn’t ask how to accept Jesus into his life. He didn’t ask to study the Bible more seriously. But the wheels are turning.

The one true God

Hindus, most often, worship a multitude of gods and bow before carved images. But perhaps for the first time in his life, he heard about someone long, long ago who exchanged the worship of many idols for the worship of the one true God.

I’m praying these Indian students return next week. I’m praying they come back with more questions and a desire to know the true, everlasting God.