

# Idolatry Tests

Anything we love more than Jesus is an idol. Use these simple tests to see if there are any idols in your life.

## Tee-Shirt Test

Sometimes the test for discovering idolatry is as simple as reading a tee-shirt. Several years ago someone produced a popular tee-shirt line in which the shirt read something like “Ice skating is life, the rest is just details.”

What is life for you? What wakes you up in the morning? For some people their shirt should read “My work is my life, the rest is just details. While other people would be more suited with a shirt that said, “my children are my life, the rest is just details.” This is true for many Christian parents.

As a teenager I should have worn the “Gaming is life, the rest is just details” shirt if I were honest. Part of me wanted to serve Jesus but I was addicted to the rush that gaming provided.

## Thought Test

What do you spend your time thinking about. What are you meditating on in the silence of a car ride or a mindless task? What does your mind drift to? I would often spend hours trying to figure out how to beat level 8 in whatever game I was playing at the time.

## Money Test

The wallet is a great test for idolatry. What do you spend your money on? Where your money is your heart will be also. I challenge you to look over your last credit or debit card bill and figure out where the money went. What did you spend your cash on? There are several software packages that can easily help you categorize where the money is going.

Gaming can be an expensive habit. New games can range upward of \$50. Many young men will spend more on one computer game than they will tithe all month long. Many teens would find that if they categorized their purchases they would find that they spent more on entertainment and clothes than just about anything else. Remember that people can make idols of themselves.

## Time Test

I once heard a sermon I will never forget. This old man of God had planted several churches including the one I attended at that time. He talked about how when we are born God gives us a wheelbarrow full of precious gems of time. As we go through life we have the choice of where to put those precious stones.

He said that as a young man he tossed many of his jewels by the wayside. Now they are lost forever. Now that he is an old man he has a nearly empty wheelbarrow. It took him till he had only a few any gems left to realize how valuable they were.

He encouraged us not to waste our time but to instead invest it in the Kingdom. That was the last thing I ever heard from this man of God because he died just a short time later. I think it was the last sermon he ever gave.

We as gamers are tossing our precious gems to things that will not last. No one on their death bed will wish they spent more time playing Halo. Invest in others because they will last forever. Invest in the Kingdom for it will last forever.

## Conversation Test

Another way to tell where your affections lie is the words you speak. What do you like to talk about with your friends? Just like our thoughts can be consumed so can our words. As a gamer I loved to talk about games with my friends. We would retell stories to each other of great moments, great victories, great amounts of time we spent staring at a electronic screen.

We all know those one topic people. That is, people that only like to talk about one thing be it sports, clothes, girls or games. Often whole friendships will revolve around one or more trivial diversions.

## Identity Test

We sometimes draw a sense of identity from our idols. I remember asking people whom I just met if they were a gamer. If they were familiar with that term I knew they were like me. I knew they had

a similar identity. As Christians ur primary source of identity should come from our identity in Christ.

There is amazing power in finding one's identity in Jesus. It is often the first step away from habitual sins, addictions and bad behaviors. If you have not become a child of God through His Son you will have a hard time doing His will.

## Addiction Test

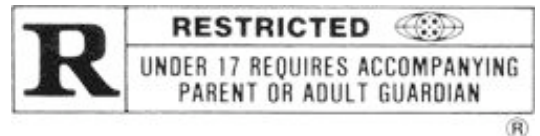
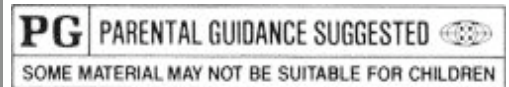
If addition is anything we don't need but can't live without then anything we are addicted to is an idol. The Center for Online Addiction has the following test on their website for online gamers to take.

Answer "yes" or "no" to the following statements to see if you may be addicted to online gaming:

- Do you need to play online games with increasing amounts of time in order to achieve the desired excitement?
- Are you preoccupied with gaming (thinking about it when offline, anticipating your next online session)?
- Have you lied to friends and family members to conceal extent of your online gaming?
- Do you feel restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop online gaming?
- Have you made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop online gaming?
- Do you use gaming as a way of escaping from problems or relieve feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, or depression?
- Have you jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, or even risked your marriage because of your online gaming habit?
- Have you jeopardized a job, educational, or career opportunity because of your online gaming habit?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions it may be a giveaway to an addiction and thereby idolatry.

## ESRB Ratings Guide



Please send any questions, comments, concerns to:

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I am willing to speak at any central Texas event free of charge. I am also available for counseling regarding gaming addiction.