

“Returning to God”

1 Samuel 7:3-4

Introduction

From Aaron and the golden calf to Paul and the altar to an unknown God, idolatry is discussed and illustrated as the governing sin throughout the Bible. All other sins are rooted in this primary sin of removing God from His central place in our lives. Idolatry happens when we replace God as our priority with any other person, place, thing or thought as our source. When we allow creation to compete with the Creator, God will not manifest His presence and work in our lives. The cost of idolatry is high. It results in the loss of God’s presence and power operating in and through us. It makes us vulnerable to attack by our spiritual enemy Satan and to the enemy of circumstances. That is why idolatry must be addressed when it becomes a stronghold for us.

The cure for idolatry is straightforward, but it requires sincere commitment. First, we overcome idolatry by repositioning God in our lives. God cannot accept second place. Once we make God subservient or equal to something or someone else, we have taken Him out of His proper position. We restore Him to His rightful place in our lives by committing to make Him first in everything.

Second, we overcome idolatry by returning to God in our hearts. We cannot simply say that we are putting God first. Our hearts should be sincerely devoted to God so that our actions show that our relationship with Him is primary. Third, we overcome idolatry by reprioritizing God in our service. Every day, we serve in various ways – at our jobs, in church, at school or for our family. But, in all of those things, we should ultimately be serving our Lord. Everything we do should be done to serve Him and for His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). When we prioritize God in our service, we remove idolatry and thereby position ourselves for God to work in our lives and on our behalf.

Getting Started

1. What things do you and others tend to idolize and put in first place rather than God?
2. Think about the primary human relationships in your life. How do you treat them? How do you let that person know they come first for you?

Let’s Get Personal

1. After listening to this week’s message, what idols did you become aware of that keep pushing God out of first place in your life?
2. What hinders you from removing those idols and devoting your heart and service to God?
3. In what areas of your life do you find it most difficult to serve for God’s glory rather than for the praise of others?

Take the Next Step

1. What steps can you take this week to remove your idols and reposition God as first in your life? How will you demonstrate to God that your relationship with Him is the most important relationship to you?
2. In what areas have you not been serving for God's glory? Confess those areas to God and commit to pray that God will reprioritize things in your heart and mind so that you are not serving yourself or other people but only Him.
3. Want to go deeper? Take time to look at the following passages: James 4:7-10; 1 Samuel 7:3-4; Ezekiel 14:1-8; Isaiah 44:9-20; Deuteronomy 32:21; Psalm 78:58; Exodus 20:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10:19-22; Psalm 135:15-18; Romans 1:18-25; 1 John 5:21; Colossians 3:5; 2 Kings 17:33; 2 Kings 17:41.

Renew Your Mind

"Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, 'If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashteroth from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.'"

1 Samuel 7:3
