



The Journey
Week of 11.8.15

Them: Idolatry

By Andrew Blackburn

I become obsessed with things very easily. For example, when the Royals started their World Series run, I suddenly became an expert on playoff apparel—what shirts were available, where they were being sold, what are the pros and cons of a poly-blend versus 100% cotton. When my wife and I are car shopping, I can very quickly go from being totally unaware of the market to being able to recite the year, mileage and price of every Ford Escape in a twenty-mile radius. If you share with me a song that I really like, I might listen to it eighty times in one day.

This stuff sounds innocent. Sometimes even useful. But if pushed too far, my default focused approach to things I like can morph into tunnel vision, causing other areas of my life to suffer. Whether I realize it or not, if I'm placing undue focus on a certain part of my life, I'm probably neglecting some other part of my life that I shouldn't be neglecting (my wife? my son? God?). And that sounds a lot like idolatry.

Idolatry sounds like one of those old Bible words that doesn't really apply to life anymore. And yes, it can refer to the worshipping of a physical object as a god. But that's not the only definition of idolatry—it can also mean "immoderate attachment or devotion to something" (Merriam-Webster). And that's something that still very much exists—in our society, in our world, in our church, in each one of us.

If my wife asks me what's been on my mind lately and I can't think of anything except car values, I've probably made car shopping an idol. If I plan my time and make all my decisions based on the hope that I'll get to sit on a couch in front of a television later, I've probably made leisure time an idol. If I can't hold a conversation because I have to check my phone every time I feel it buzz, I've probably made technology (or connectedness?) an idol.

These kinds of thoughts are equal parts scary and reassuring to me. Here's the scary part: anything and everything in my life could become an idol. I could become obsessed with money, work, the Royals, leisure time, honeycrisp apples...it can happen with anything. And it can happen to anyone. And it can happen quickly.

But here's the reassuring part: if something has become an idol to us, it doesn't have to stay that way. Everything God created was intended to be good. And if we're able to (with God's help) put an idol back into its proper place, it can be made good again.

"What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give."

~ Tim Keller, Counterfeit Gods

(You are encouraged to use the Read, Think, Pray, Live method for a guide. Click [here](#) to read more about developing your devotional life. If you don't own a Bible, pick up "The Story of God" Bible available for free at the Welcome Center in our atrium.)

monday 11.9

Read: [Daniel 3:1-7](#)

Think: In this passage, we see a very literal, physical interpretation of idolatry. (The story goes on and gets really interesting—read all of [chapter 3](#) if you have time!) We may not be faced with physical images that we're forced to worship, but it's a pretty spot-on picture of what idolatry can look like inside us. What similarities do you see between this kind of idolatry and the kind that we might face in our lives (money, work, sex, etc.)? How does Nebuchadnezzar's approach to this idol mirror the role idols can play in our lives? And what can we do about it?

Pray:

Live:

tuesday 11.10

Read: [Mark 10:17-23](#)

Think: This man followed all of God's commands, but one thing still got in his way—his love of money. No matter how "righteous" our lives are, it can be easy for things to come between us and God. What might those things be in your life? What would be difficult to give up if Jesus asked you to?

Pray:

Live:

wednesday 11.11

Read: [Luke 10:38-42](#)

Think: Idolatry can take many forms, and as we see here, sometimes things as simple as distraction or productivity can take our focus off of Jesus. Reflect on your life. What hidden idols might be distracting you from Jesus—keeping you from “choosing what is better”?

Pray:

Live:

thursday 11.12

Read: [Colossians 3:1-6](#)

Think: Paul points out that many things that can become idols to us belong to our “earthly nature.” But he also points out a solution—setting our minds on things above. What does this look like in real life? What are “things above”? And what would it look like to let those things take the space in our minds that is currently occupied by idols?

Pray:

Live:

friday-sunday 11.13-11.15

Read: [Philippians 4:8-9](#)

Think: Just like in our previous passage, Paul gives instruction on what to think about here. But this time, he gets specific. Think about a potential idol in your life, and evaluate it based on Paul's criteria. Is it true? Noble? Right? Pure? This list is a good way to think through what should be taking up space in our minds. What in your life are you giving a disproportionate amount of space in your mind?

Pray:

Live:

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grow (resources to help you in your study)

Sunday's Sermon: Click [here](#) for podcast, or [video](#)

click [here](#) for more resources – this will link you back to the journey's main page.

connect: click [here](#) to go to Heartland's Facebook page

mobile connections: download the free Heartland app for your iPhone or Android device and access our resources virtually anywhere

go (action steps)

prayer? Please send us an email by clicking [here](#) or consider asking someone to pray with you after a Sunday service, available at the front near the stage.

care? Do you need to talk with someone? Please call us at 913.341.5820 ext. 330

go—Sign up to serve: by clicking [here](#)

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