

Bite Size Bible Study

Idols in USA #169

By Pastor Lee

Probably everyone wants the same thing we do – prosperity and happiness. Our problem is where do we expect that to come from? If we expect it to come from God, we are on the right track. He is the loving God and wants us to prosper and be happy on the journey. But His timetable may not conform to ours. We may have some suffering to go through to find that true happiness or maybe some hard times before we can appreciate the prosperity.

When things don't conform to our timetable we may have a desire to acquire them through our own means. This plays on the verge of idolatry. That is putting something else before God – our timetable before His.

Recognizing that we are placing something else before God is not an easy task, because it may look good from our perspective. It has been said, "the end justifies the means". That seems in our human understand to be a reasonable conclusion. But is it?

If we are not careful we can also worship idols, not the kind the ancients did but the things we have created. Our advancements in medicine are a good thing, but do we trust more in medicine than we trust in God?

Many of the things we desire are good. But what means do we use to obtain them? Israel wanted good crops and a peaceful land, but looking to idolatrous gods was not the way to get them.

We may want a loving family and the means to support them, but where should that come from – our government, our job, our church, or our ???

Churches have a need for a minimum number of supporting members, but how do they increase their numbers? Some have turned their services into a "Broadway Production" where the gospel message takes backstage to the music and elaborate productions. This generally produces the desired outcome, but is this method an idol to produce support? Does it support God's instructions?

Someone may feel that God has called him or her into a specific occupation. It may provide a good income. But to get there they may be tempted to allow themselves unethical methods to obtain that position. In their climb to the top they may climb over other people that God wants in that position as well. Has that position become an idol and is that the way God wants them to rise to prominence?

Using what in our eyes is a good motive to obtain our objective is dangerous, because if we use tactics that

God teaches are wrong, it defeats all the right we think we are doing.

Israel often put their trust in the gods of the land. What they desired was often good, but they forgot where all good things come from. By following other gods they were led into ways of living that God could not condone.

They forsook all the commands of the Lord their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal.

2 Kings 17:16 NIV

Today we are often led into ways of living that God cannot condone either. We might modernize 2 Kings to: *They placed aside the commands of the Lord their God and made for themselves idols in the shape of war machines, and tall over populated cities. They bowed down to all their scientific accomplishments, and they worshiped all that they had created.*

God is not threatened by our scientific discoveries, our intellectual achievements or our advances in medical care. Someone gaining a political position through lies, misrepresentation and deceit does not thwart God's plans. He is in control even when things we fear and despise seem in control of our lives.

Rather than wondering where God is, maybe we should be wondering what God is teaching us, as well as why we need to learn this lesson.

Many things in this world do command respect. But that respect should not be greater than our respect of God – the creator of all those things we give respect to. When we give respect to these things they should not violate the teaching and directions that God has given us. They should not lead us to disrespect God's teachings and live in ways that do not reflect His character.

When we do things that destroy the environment or mistreat the animals and vegetation, or demean people, we are not reflecting His character – He created them and said that they were good. When any one of these things becomes more important than God it has become an idol to us. We should strive to be aware of this and not allow it to cause us to violate His instructions. We should, in our own minds, place him as the only one who deserves to be worshipped and placed above all else.

Food for thought: We fear death and sometimes life becomes our idol. But Jesus has conquered death and provided life beyond our death.

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