

## Give to Break Idols

### Isaiah 44; Matthew 6:19-24; Colossians 3:5

We all have idols - things we pursue and trust in to make life satisfying and safe. Very often these idols are revealed by how we spend our money. However, when we deliberately choose to sacrificially share from our wealth, we break the hold of idols over our hearts, and we find contentment, freedom and joy in God.

Turn to Matthew 6

Every Knee series: **challenging each of us to give ALL WE ARE and ALL WE HAVE to Jesus**

By answering the question: **Why should we become generous and joyful givers?**

- 1) because giving is worship and God is worthy of our worship
- 2) because giving is how we invest in eternity
- 3) because we are rich, and rich people should be generous!

**This week's answer: because giving breaks our idols**

**When you hear "idols" you probably think of these:**

- little statues people pray to – as old as humanity itself

**To most of us... praying to a little statue seems RIDICULOUS**

- how dumb do you have to be to think that piece of carved stone is going to help you?!

**But ancient people weren't dumb – knew an idol of wood or stone was powerless**

- What they believed: if you work hard enough, skillfully enough to create a beautiful idol...
- ...you could convince a god to come live within it – what idols were: homes for gods
- ...then you could worship and make sacrifices to the god
- ...and in return the god would give you what you wanted in life

**That's what idolatry has always been about: getting what you want**

- read Ezek 14:3a
- heart = your desires and affections
- idolatry = worshipping your desires – making them absolute and ultimate
- idols just tools to convince the gods to give you the desires of your heart
- each idol went with a particular god, and each god ruled a particular aspect of life
  - o Want a huge harvest? Worship Baal
  - o Want to have children? Worship Asherah
  - o Want victory in war? Worship Anat
- you made an idol for whatever god you needed to get the thing you wanted

We are too sophisticated to use little statues as tools to compel gods to give us what we want  
We know better... don't need statues or gods if you've got this... **MONEY!**

**For most people alive today this is what idolatry looks like – not statues – wealth**

- **Paul warned us... Read Col 3:5** "greed, which amounts to idolatry"
  - o greed = loving wealth and pursuing it as your priority in life = idolatry
  - o makes us as guilty as the ancient Israelites when they worshipped Baal!
- **Read 1 Tim 6:10**
  - o Notice: Paul didn't say "money is the root"... it's the "love" of money – chasing after it
  - o Money isn't evil or righteous – it's just a thing
    - Just like little statues of animals or people – nothing wrong with carving!

- It's wrong when you worship it to get what you want in life – becomes an idol
- **Jesus said the same thing... Read Mt 6:24**
  - “serve” = you've made it ultimate in your life – what you seek above all else
  - If you serve money, you can't serve God – it's now your god

**Now, let's be clear... when we talk about the love of money, it's not that we love money itself**

- unless you're Scrooge McDuck you're not hugging, kissing, or swimming in your money!
- it's not really the money we love... it's what the money gets us
- just like those little statues – it wasn't about the statue, it's what the statue could get you

**We idolize money because we believe it can get us the things we want most in life:**

- **Satisfaction**
  - The most obvious thing people think money will buy
  - Buy that house, car, vacation, cloths, food... and you will finally be satisfied
  - How to tell if you're worshipping money to find satisfaction:
    - Ask: “If I could just buy \_\_\_\_\_ I'd finally be happy.”
    - If you put anything in that blank, you've got an idol
    - You've made something other than God necessary in your life
  - That's idolatry... belief that satisfaction in life requires God + something else
    - So you chase money to spend money to buy that “something else” to make you happy
- **Security**
  - Here's the question to answer to tell if you're worshipping money to find security:
    - “If I have \$\_\_\_\_\_ in the bank, I'll be content”
    - It's a trick question! If your contentment requires a money figure – savings is an idol!
    - **Read Heb 13:5** – our security is found in the faithfulness of God, not money
  - If you're relying on money for security, it is an idol
  - So here's the irony of money:
    - It's idolized as much by the big spender as the obsessive saver
    - Both use money to try to get what only God can provide: satisfaction or security
    - You can commit idolatry by spending too much or saving too much!
  - Where Julie and I struggle – both come from families that prioritized saving money
    - As a kid I learned the value of saving money = a moral imperative
    - Julie saved almost everything she ever earned – incredibly good saver
  - Be clear: it is REALLY good to save!
    - We should be responsible stewards of God's money and save for the future
  - But savings become an idol if we rely on them instead of God for security in life
- **Love and Respect**
  - What's the American dream?
    - College, good career, get married, have kids, buy big house in beautiful neighborhood
    - Those are the people we respect – society looks up to those who are financially successful
  - But to have all that... you've got to earn a lot of money! Respect in the eyes of our culture takes money... lots of it.
  - So many people in our society, and throughout the world worship at the idol of money because they think wealth will buy them love and respect from others
- **Notice:** none of these things I've mentioned so far that we do with money are inherently bad – buying houses, going on vacations, building retirement accounts – none of those are bad things. But...
  - **Timothy Keller...**
- Good things become idols when we trust in them to give us the satisfaction, security, and love that only God can give.

- The Bible is clear: if we have trusted in Jesus, we already have all we need in Him
  - o Already have satisfaction in heaven to look forward to, already have absolute eternal security, already have unconditional love
  - o There's nothing more we truly need if we have Jesus
- BUT if you're like me, then even though you already have everything you need in Jesus, it is still so hard not to let the good things of life become idols.
  - o I don't have to try to be an idolater – it is my natural bent to chase satisfaction, security, love, and respect through wealth.
- **John Calvin** "Every one of us is, even from his mother's womb, a master craftsman of idols"

## **Idolatry is alive & well in our hearts today... and here's why that's a problem**

### **1) because idolatry angers God**

- First 3 of the 10 commandments were about idolatry – 30%!
- Point: God really HATES idolatry
- Why? Not because He's egotistical and can't stand competing for your affection
- It's because He knows how destructive idolatry is for us... That leads to point 2

### **2) because idolatry destroys us**

- Our idolatry doesn't damage God; it damages us! Idols poison the idolater.
- **Read Isa 44:9-11** – this is a promise
  - o your idols will blind you – the more you chase the idols of this world, the less clearly you can see God's truth – in this same chapter, God says that idolatry is like mud being smeared over your eyes – you can't see reality
  - o result: you will be terrified and ashamed – you chase money thinking it will get you satisfaction, security, and love, but it will bring just the opposite – disappointment, fear, and shame.
- Why? Because the satisfaction, security, and love you're trying to get with money are things that only God can provide!
  - o There is no other source in the universe that can meet our deepest needs!
  - o **Read Prov 18:11**
  - o "his strong city... high wall" – he trusts in his wealth to make him safe
  - o but what's the problem? The safety of wealth is only "in his own imagination"!
    - There is no real security in wealth!
    - economy could crash; it could be stolen; you could be run over by a bus
  - o Money WILL FAIL YOU eventually if you are relying on it for what only God can provide
- And that's why the idol of money is so destructive – because Mt 6 – you cannot worship both God and money. If you choose to worship money, you are taking your eyes off of God who is the only source of the things you need in life.
- When we worship money, we pay the price – disappointment, fear, and shame... maybe not immediately, but eventually.
- We must recognize: **money is a wonderful servant, but a terrible god!**
  - o You worship it and it will destroy you

## **So, how do we break the idol of wealth? Through Generosity**

### **Read Matthew 6:21**

- Jesus has 2 meanings in mind in this verse – both are true
- **1) How you spend your money reveals your heart – your spending shows what you love**
  - o Absolutely true! Look at your spending habits and you'll know what you care about
  - o Because money is valuable – by definition! So you're only going to part with it for things you hold valuable
  - o Example 1: Look at your spending and almost everything is going to your **mortgage**. Could be that you don't earn much and with even starter homes costing so much in this town, there's just

- no way around that – totally fine! But it could be that you earn a good living, plenty of money, but you chose such a big and expensive house that it's sucking up every cent that you don't spend on food. Tells me you really love your house, or you wouldn't have been willing to give up so much to have it. If there's hardly anything going to charity/church/missions – if it's all going to the house – may be that your house has become your idol.
- Example 2: You spend and give very little and **save almost everything**. Could be that you've made an idol of your savings
  - Example 3: You spend more on **vacations** than anything else – tells me you really love travel. Nothing at all wrong with vacations or travel, but if that's where almost all of your discretionary income goes, it could mean you've made an idol out of travel.
  - Again, there's nothing wrong with a house, a savings account, or a vacation. But when an inordinate amount of your money is dedicated to these things, leaving you very little for charity, church, or missions, that may mean you have an idol problem.
  - Our money reveals our heart.
  - But there's something even more important Jesus is saying here...
- **2) How you spend your money directs your heart – your spending shapes what you love**
- The connection between our money and our heart is so intimate – one shapes the other. Your heart – your desires – shape what you give your money to, but at the same time, what you give your money to shapes your desires!
  - **Point: if you want to love something... give your money to it!!**
  - If you want to **love God** more, give more money to God and your heart will follow!
    - Giving often precedes emotion – you give *before* you feel like it because the act of giving will grow the emotion – grow love for God by giving to God
  - If you want to love **missions** more, give more money to missions and your heart will follow!
    - I've taught over 100 interns, fellows, and young staff at the church over the last decade. Which of them do you think I stay most closely connected with?
    - The ones I give money to! The ones that go into missions and that Julie and I support financially... that's who I tend to think about. Why? Because my heart follows my money!
    - So if you feel convicted that you should care more about missions, give money to people taking the gospel to other nations and I promise, your affection for missions will grow!
  - If you want to care more about the **poor**, give more money to charity and your heart will follow!
    - I've shared about Julie and I starting a charitable organization to help those in need purchase cars. Guess what? I now care a lot more about those in need.
    - In the past, it was so easy not to think about the poor. Now, it's not! Because where my money goes, my heart follows!

**So let me give you a very practical application: Pray about your giving**

- Think about where your money goes
- Are you using your money as a tool to help people find and follow Jesus?
- Or are you using it like an idol to get satisfaction, security, and respect in life?
- If you let a friend see all your spending, saving, and giving – what would they think you love?
- Ask God to help you see any idols of wealth you've allowed into your life
  - whether idols of spending or idols of saving
- If you discover that like most of us, you have made wealth an idol in some way, I encourage you to give in order to break that idol
- Give to God and to what God loves and that idol will diminish

**To help you on that journey: I encourage you to pray over your Every Knee Commitment Card**

- Every Knee = our 2-year giving initiative here at GBC to fund the next steps God has called us to take to help people find and follow Jesus

- Next week we'll all turn these in – as I've said before: not a pledge card, not a contract
  - o A tool to help each of us think strategically about our giving to our church
  - o A tool to help our elders make wise decisions about how to move forward
- Ask God for wisdom as you fill this out or work with your spouse to fill this out

**And as you pray... also ask God to bring to your mind 1 PERSON and 1 PLACE that need Jesus**

- Next week we'll also give you a bookmark where you can write down the name of 1 person and 1 place, either a city or nation, where Jesus is not yet well known – we'll ask you to pray at least once a month for the next 2 years for that person and place to find and follow Jesus

**Because that's really what Every Knee is all about – not money or buildings – but helping more people find and follow our Savior, Jesus, who we get to celebrate by sharing**

- Remember what we said at the beginning of the series: you will never out-give God!
- He is the most generous giver of all because He gave us Jesus and Jesus gave us His life so that we could have eternal life as a free gift.
- Jesus died so that we could have the satisfaction, security, and love the world is desperate to find – they're worshipping money in vain trying to find something Jesus has already given you!
- give thanks to Jesus for already giving you all the satisfaction, security, and love you'll ever need.
- Ask Him to help you really BELIEVE that that's true.
- And ask Him to help you crush your idols and worship Him alone because He is worthy