

ICEBERGS: Family Idols

Isaiah 44:14-19

INTRODUCTION

-Last week we began a new series called "Icebergs That Will Sink Your Family's Ship"

-We kicked off the series by talking about "unforgiveness" and the impact it has on families.

-Today we're talking about something that many Christians don't really talk about...idols!

-We live in a modern society so idols aren't as obvious in our daily lives as they are in other places.

-In China I had the opportunity to share the message of Jesus with a woman and she was shocked when we got to the resurrection!

-We told her about eternal life with God about following Jesus and she made a decision to accept Christ as her Savior.

-When she was getting ready to leave I noticed two things: She had a bracelet with a sharp tooth on it and a jade necklace.

-I asked the translator to ask her what those were for and she said the dog tooth bracelet was to prevent some kind of sickness and the Buddha necklace was for good luck.

-Through the translator, this is what I told her: "You're wearing the tooth of a dead dog and the necklace of dead man but now you serve the living God! You don't need those anymore."

-Those things were idols, false gods, and superstitions of a dead religion. We don't see a lot of that in McMinnville! **Or...do...we?**

-I want to read a passage from Isaiah 44 that you may have never read before and it is awesome! You're going to love this.

-It's Isaiah the prophet describing people who worship idols.

Isaiah 44:14 "He cuts down cedars; he selects the cypress and the oak; he plants the pine in the forest to be nourished by the rain.

15 Then he uses part of the wood to make a fire. With it he warms himself and bakes his bread. Then—yes, it's true—he takes the rest of it and makes himself a god to worship! He makes an idol and bows down in front of it!

16 He burns part of the tree to roast his meat and to keep himself warm. He says, "Ah, that fire feels good." 17 Then he takes what's left and makes his god: a carved idol! He falls down in front of it, worshiping and praying to it. "Rescue me!" he says. "You are my god!"

18 Such stupidity and ignorance! Their eyes are closed, and they cannot see. Their minds are shut, and they cannot think. 19 The person who made the idol never stops to reflect, "Why, it's just a block of wood! I burned half of it for heat and used it to bake my bread and roast my meat. How can the rest of it be a god? Should I bow down to worship a piece of wood?"

The poor, deluded fool feeds on ashes. He trusts something that can't help him at all. Yet he cannot bring himself to ask, "Is this idol that I'm holding in my hand a lie?"

-Can you believe that's in the Bible?

-It is so pointed; it's a little sarcastic! And it's still relevant.

-We may not see many people worshipping wooden statues

-But many families are doing what Isaiah describes:

- Bowing down to lesser things
- Trusting in things that can't help them AND
- Holding on to lies....that their idols are telling them

-I want to consider with you today, what the Bible says about idols and how those idols can undermine the strong families that God wants us to have.

GOD WARNED HIS PEOPLE REPEATEDLY ABOUT FALSE GODS!

-Have you ever read the 10 commandments?

-The 1st & 2nd commandments concern idols both deal with idols!

-The first commandment says, "You must not have any other god but me." (Ex 20:3)

-Many of the world's religions are inclusive.

-They say believe what you want, serve whatever god you want, all roads lead to the same place.

-But Christianity is exclusive. Our God is exclusive.

-Live and let live is **NOT** his policy. "Worship whoever you want and it'll you to me"is not how God looks at things.

-In the first commandment God says, "It's just me. Only me."

-Don't worship other gods because there are no other gods!

-When I was in high school I went to Mexico to build houses with the same group that our kids work with in Mexico.

-Back then they'd let us go shopping in Tijuana and all of us guys wanted to buy Oakley sunglasses.

-Real Oakley's were \$100 bucks but in Tijuana you could buy cheap imitations Oakley's for \$10!

-And our youth pastor would tell us "they're fakes!"

-We didn't care! They said Oakely on them! They looked good!

-Good enough for us! But they weren't **REAL** Oakley's.

-God didn't warn us against others gods because he's insecure or jealous about a little friendly competition.

-He gave this command because he knows that he is the only God, and that all other gods are fakes & cheap imitations!

-There is one true God and all other gods are impostors!

-The second commandment says, "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea." (Ex 20:4)

-Not only are we to have just one God, we're not to make images for ourselves or others to worship.

-In any list of rules, the first rule is the most important right?

-At summer camp rule # 1 is "Don't be dumb." **Covers a lot!**

- In the Bible the first two commandments are critically important!
- God laid these out as foundation truths for all his people for all of time! No other gods and no god-like images. **Crystal clear!**
- And yet, if you've read the OT, you'll recognize these two commandments were the ones that were broken most often!
- Time and again those OT people bowed down to lesser gods
- They put their trust in idols that couldn't help them
- They clung tightly to the lies those false gods were selling
- If you read the whole OT you could start wondering...how did they miss it? How did they fall for something so obvious?
- But before we think such thoughts about **them** maybe we should ask ourselves; how could we?
- Because the worship of idols is alive and well right here in our own backyard. Maybe in our church. Maybe even in our families.

WHAT MAKES AN IDOL AN IDOL?

- How do you recognize them?
- How would you know them if you see them?
- If they were just wooden statues on the mantle we could probably spot those right away and turn them into fire wood!
- But the modern day idols are much more subtle.

They are distractions that seek to take your focus off of God.

- This is probably Satan's best option for deceiving Christians.
- He rarely convinces Christians to totally abandon faith in God!
- It's not so easy to talk Christian people out of their Christian faith; but it's fairly easy to distract them.
- Think about all the things we **INTEND** to do as Christians.
- GO TO CHURCH:** But its deer season, elk season, fishing season, NFL season!
- MOST OF US WANT TO READ THE BIBLE:** but many of us don't!
- PRAY:** Almost every Christian I know says they like to pray more.
- What are we spending our time on, when we can't seem to find time for reading the Bible?
- Maybe you've even set out to pray and read more, but something distracts you.
- Something in your pocket is vibrating, or chirping, or demanding your attention...right now!
- It could be an emergency, someone may need your help, you'd better look at it right now...I'll get back to my Bible and prayers in just a minute but THIS COULD BE IMPORTANT.
- Oh it's a video of a puppy from _____!
- Oh, my sister posted a picture of her breakfast! Yummy!
- A link to an article from my dad; click on that real fast.
- Could cell phones be an idol? People are always bowing to them!
- Anything can be an idol.
- Idols can be anything that causes us to take our focus off of God!

- To identify idols in our lives, we should all ask “what are the distractions in my life that lead me away from the things of God?”
- That’ll be different things with different people!

They are diversions that lead you away from God.

- I’ll never forget a family in the church I worked at Eugene.
 - They were one of those couples that came in and got involved right away.
 - Man they were committed people!!!! Serving, leading, really doing some dynamic things in the church.
 - And then one day they were just gone. We were calling them, seeing if they were ok, wondering what happened.
 - They had decided that they wanted to build their own house.
 - And so they pulled the trigger that without really considering how it would impact their church involvement and ministry.
 - There’s nothing wrong with building a house. But what started out as a project led them away from the church for about 5 years.
 - During that time they weren’t in church, their kids weren’t in church, their ministry was basically abandoned. For a house!
 - Maybe some of you are thinking...it’s only 5 years. Came back!
 - Who were they serving those 5 years? It wasn’t God.
- Jeremiah 10:14 “The craftsmen are disgraced by the idols they make, for their carefully shaped works are a fraud. These idols have no breath or power.”
- We see idols and think statues.
 - But what if idols could be things like houses, careers, hobbies?
 - The things we’re crafting aren’t statues, but modern day idols also have no breath and no power.
 - I shared a while back about a man who called my pastor friend on his death bed.
 - And he wept as he confessed that he always meant to be a devoted Christian and raise his family to be Christians.
 - And only as he was dying, when it was too late, did he realize that his busyness and his business diverted away him from what really matters most.
 - I have every confidence that man is in heaven, but he left no legacy of faith, and none of his kids and grandkids are saved.
 - He spent his whole life on things that you can’t take with you and died without knowing if his family would ever join him in heaven.
 - Idols are things that distract you, they divert you.

They are deceivers who take what rightfully belongs to God.

- A quick survey of the OT reveals all kinds of false gods that the people of Israel worshipped.
- Ashtoreth:** Canaanite goddess of fertility and maternity.
- Baal:** Canaanite god of fertility; often worshipped in the form of the sun or the storm; he supposedly made the land produce crops

Chemosh: Victory in battle. A very violent god.

Dagon: God of water and grain. (1 Sam 5:1-5; Judges 16:23)

Molech: Fire god who accepted child-sacrifices in fiery furnaces.

Marduk: God of water and vegetation.

-In my 20 years as a pastor I've never lost a church member to Baal, Chemosh or Marduk! Not one!

-But I've lost some to money. Some to success. To business.

-I've seen many go because of non-Christian spouses or who they're dating.

-Lost some to cults. I've seen people walk away from Jesus to for clubs, hobbies, past times, and sports!

-We have to watch out for idols, for deceivers!

-Have you ever noticed that deceiver rhymes with Beaver?

-Idols come in the form of distractions, diversions, and deceivers.

-And they can grab hold of very committed godly people.

-Without even realizing it many Christians find themselves...

- Bowing down to lesser things
- Trusting in things that can't help them AND
- Holding on to lies....that their idols are telling them

HOW DO I IDENTIFY IDOLS IN MY OWN LIFE?

Something GOOD that you put in God's place.

-There are so many good things in life.

-Some Christians are so uptight they can find the bad in anything!

-There are tons of great things in this life that we have God's blessing to enjoy...but we have to keep them in balance.

-Being **healthy** is good. If you want to eat right, and exercise and workout and be healthy. Good for you!

-The Bible even talks about the benefit of physical exercise.

1 Tim 4:8 "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

-Do you see what Paul is saying here? Physical training (exercise) is great but there is something that's more important. Godliness.

-Your spiritual life can't be shoved to the side for exercise.

-Exercise helps you here, but your relationship with God helps you in this life and will lead you to eternal life!

-It's a GOOD thing...but don't let it take God's place.

-There are lots of GOOD things like that!

-You know what I told both of my kids the summer they were heading into Jr. High? You're going to go to youth group now.

-And I want you to understand that this it's not negotiable.

-I go to group every week; you're going to go to group every week. It doesn't matter if you have a lot of homework you're going. So plan ahead. Homework doesn't trump youth group.

-I wanted my kids to know that grades are important, but God and God's people are the most important things in our life.

-That's our family's standard. Doesn't have to be yours.

-Family is a good thing. But even family can be an idol.

-Familolatry is alive and well in the American church.

-I've seen lifelong Christians walking away from the church completely to hang out with their grandkids.

-What are they modeling for their grandkids?

-I see parents abandoning their fellowship or ministry or marriage to run their kids around in endless amounts of activities.

-What are you teaching your kids about that balance between God and everything else?

-I've heard of families skipping church so they could have family time, because they're so wiped out from all the other stuff they're doing! That's messed up! Skip that other stuff!

-Busyness is an iceberg that'll sink our family's ship. I'm talking about that next week; come back...unless you have stuff going

-Come back next week; that's what we're talking about.

-There are so many **GOOD** things in life that are ok for us to enjoy and participate in...but we have to find that balance.

-Ministry can be an idol. I have to watch myself on that one.

-No one would dare criticize health, education, family, or ministry.

-Good things! But when good things edge god out...they're idols.

Something NEUTRAL that becomes all consuming.

-There are some things in life that aren't really good or bad...they're just things.

-Having money isn't good or bad, right or wrong.

-What you do with it can be good or bad!

-Having a job isn't morally good or bad; it's responsible.

-But letting your job take over your life could be bad.

-Recreation isn't good or bad. I love to recreate! Nothing wrong with having a hobby, it's probably healthy.

-God isn't for or against quilting, or hunting, or playing Xbox.

-God doesn't mind if you hike, bike, fish, or go camping.

-The wrath of God is not being revealed against those on cook, bake, ride motor cycles, or crochet!

-He isn't against Facebook, Snapchat, or Instagram.

-If you want to sit around playing Candy Crush...what is wrong with you? Quit that and do something real! And stop inviting to play with you! You know who you are...and you need help!

-There are a lot of things out there you can do; lots of ways that we can spend our time...just keep them in proper perspective.

1 John 5:1 "Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts."

-Idols can be good things. Neutral things. And they can also be...

Something BAD that takes squeezes god out of your life.

-Any kind of addiction can be an idol.

-When you get up in the morning and have to have IT...whatever IT is, you've got a problem.

-Drugs and alcohol addictions are easy to pick on

-But people are addicted to pornography...that's an idol

-Addicted to playing the lottery or gambling.

-They are addicted to television to video games.

-Addicted to food. Addicted to all kinds of things.

-Anything can become an idol.

-We have to be honest with ourselves about the idols we serve.

They cause us to...

- Bow down to lesser things
- Trust in things that can't help them AND
- Hold on to lies...

-So how can these idols sink your family's ship?

-If you've ever seen Christmas Vacation with Chevy Chase there are some real life lessons to be learned in there.

-The main character Clark Griswold is obsessed with getting his family a new swimming pool for Christmas.

-He's fretting over it, angling for it. He's stressed out.

-He's overextended himself to have this thing he really wanted to give his family.

-But at the end he nearly ruins "The Griswold Family Christmas" while trying to do something for his family.

-There are a lot of families in that boat.

-They're trying to do good things for their families, but maybe missing the thing their family needs to most.

-That's what idols do. We know the scenarios.

-The couple that live and breathes for their children, and then their children leave.

-The idols they lived for grew up and moved away and suddenly their marriage is over because the only thing in common was kids.

-Or the man who works late nights and weekends making money so he can have money in retirement but retires alone because he lost his family to his job.

-The family that teaches their kids that sports come before church and are shocked when their kids grow up to love sports...but don't know Jesus.

-Or the single mom who so desperate for security that she marries a guy that doesn't love Jesus; and he leads the whole family away

-The details aren't all that important. It amounts to the same thing it's always amounted to:

- Bowing down to lesser things
- Trusting in things that can't help them AND
- Holding on to lies...

Josh 24:14-15 "So fear the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. 15 But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."