



God is Calling. #5: Call to Faithfulness

Text: Exodus 32

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God had called the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Then He made a covenant with them that He would be their God and they would be His people. He called them to faithfulness. And they said, “All that the Lord has commanded we will do!” (See Exodus 19:8) But it takes a period of 40 days of waiting on the Lord to change all of that.

1. **Read Exodus 32:1-8.** Why did the Israelites turn away from God and to an idol?
2. We may not make golden calves, but we have our own culturally accepted idols. (e.g. food, alcohol, our phones, money, pornography, etc.) *An idol is anything that competes with God for our affection and loyalty.* Answer the questions in the Study Deeper for yourself. What did God reveal to you?
3. **Read Exodus 32:21-24.** All idols have 3 things in common: (1) tendency to go back over and over and over, (2) elicit ability to rationalize because we don't trust God, and (3) there is always a price to pay. How have you seen these three dynamics at play regarding the idol(s) you identified in the previous question?
4. **Read Exodus 32:30-32 and Colossians 2:13-15.** The answer to idolatry is the atonement, the bringing together of two estranged parties by payment of a sacrifice, that happened at the cross of Jesus Christ. Dan charged us to hold our idols next to the cross, because beside Jesus, they lose every time. What makes Jesus better than whatever idol you are most often tempted to turn to?

Challenge: When we compare our idols to Jesus, Jesus wins hands down every time. So the way to break free from our idols is not willpower. It is to grow our love for Jesus. What stirs your affections for Jesus? How can you incorporate more of those things into your week this week?

Prayer: Use the ACTS prayer model for your group's prayer time. For each section, the leader will read aloud the prompt, and then group members will call out short prayers based on the prompt.

Adoration – What is true about God that makes Him far greater than the idols that you are most often tempted to turn to? Praise Him for those truths.

Confession – Confess and repent of the things you are most tempted to love more than God.

Thanksgiving – Thank God for the ways He has graciously dealt with your idolatry and turned you back to Him, including the cross.

Supplication – Ask for the Holy Spirit's help to love God more than your idols.

STUDY DEEPER

How do you identify your idols?

Many segments of the church today are becoming more vocal about the subject of “idolatry.” This prevalent biblical theme—something we find throughout the Old and New Testaments—should stand at the center of our definition of sin ([Romans 1:18-31](#)). Sins are not merely the wrongs we commit. Sin is ultimately related to *what* or *who* we worship.

Several years ago I heard a wonderful sermon preached by Mark Driscoll about the subject of idolatry. In the message he explains how idolatry lies at the bottom of our sinful behaviors. (The audio sermon comes from [Jubilee Church](#) in London. It was preached on July 13, 2008. You can hear the whole sermon on [their website](#).)

Mark Driscoll on Idolatry

Martin Luther says this on the Ten Commandments, that the first of the Ten Commandments are these: there's only one God, and you worship Him alone. He goes on to say that the rest of the commandments are implications about the first two commandments. If God is your only God—Jesus—and you worship Him alone, guess what? You won't *lie*. See, we lie to avoid consequence or to make ourselves look better, but if we worship God and not our *image*, we won't lie. You won't *covet* if you worship God alone. You won't find your identity in the car you drive, the home you own, the clothes you wear, the income you make, the intellect you have, the achievements, accomplishments, and possessions that you obtain. You won't commit *adultery* if you worship God alone. You see, the rest of the Ten Commandments are obeyed if you obey the first two. *Jesus* is God—not sex, not fame, not money, not power, not glory, not intellect, not IQ, not achievement, not home-ownership, not pleasure and passion—Jesus...

Let me give you a functional definition of worship: someone or something is in *the position of glory*. That's preeminence and power. That's significance. This is your greatest treasure, your deepest longing, your first love. This is the person or thing that is—above all else—*this is in the position of glory*. And then what we do

is we worship by making sacrifices: time, energy, money, heart, focus, attention goes to the thing that is our little god and we worship it...

Are you ready for some painful examples? Who or what would you be most likely to worship instead of Jesus? Your spouse? Your health? Your comfort? Your children? Your grandchildren?... They're good gifts *from God*, not given to be worshipped *instead of God*. That's why people become disappointed when their spouse doesn't meet all their needs. They've got their spouse in the position of Jesus expecting from them only what Jesus can give: comfort, security, peace, and sinless relational harmony. They become disappointed with their children because their children do not give them the significance and the success and the satisfaction that they yearn for. This is why people, when they get sick, they curse God and become very angry, because their health is what they truly worship...

I'll give you a way this works. First of all we have a picture of "heaven." Now, it's not the Bible's view of heaven: a great city, forever together, with the nations, and Jesus. And we have a picture of "hell": it's not the real hell in the Bible where you're suffering because of your sins forever. And then we want to be saved from our proverbial "hell" into our proverbial "heaven," so we come up with what I'll call a "functional savior," and then we worship it.

So if you're single, and that's your hell, and marriage is your heaven, who's your functional savior? Fiancé. If you don't have children, and that's your hell, and having children would be your heaven, who's your functional savior? Children. If you're sick, and that's your functional hell, and health is your functional heaven, then healing is your functional savior.

And what we will do then is we will even use the name of Jesus to try and get Jesus to give us our real god. "Jesus, I will worship you if you give me a spouse." "Jesus, I will worship you if you give me a child." "Jesus, I will worship you if you heal me." "Jesus, I will worship you if you pay my bills." What we're saying is, "Jesus, give me my real god." Just so you know, Jesus doesn't like to do that—in the same way husbands don't like to go out and get boyfriends for their wife. Jesus is married to the church, and he does not like it when we ask him to go get other people to date...

Let me ask some questions:

What are you most afraid of? What are you *most* afraid of? "I don't want to get sick?" "I don't want to be alone?" "I don't want my spouse to die?" "I don't want to be at the funeral of my child?" "I don't want to lose my job?" "I don't want to lose my last friend?" What are you most afraid of? Behind that may be your idol.

Number two: **What do you long for most passionately?** What gets you up in the morning? Why do you go to work? Why do you pray? Why do you care? Why do you strive? Why do you try?

Where do you run for comfort? Things go bad, you're stressed...do you run to alcohol? Do you run to food? Do you run to pornography? Do you run to vice? Do you get angry? Do you curse? Do you just go to bed and pull the covers over your head and pretend that it's all going away?

What do you complain about most? Probably indicates something that you're very frustrated with, and if you're frustrated with it, it's because you value it so much, and it's not being or doing what you want or need, perceptibly, for it to be or do.

What angers you the most? What just makes you *furious*? Is it when Jesus is not taught properly? Does it have *anything* to do with Jesus or is it all about *you*? All of your anger is about you. It's not about the people who are suffering or the name of Jesus being dishonored. What angers you?

What makes you happiest? What are the best memories in your life? "Oh, if I could just do that again."

How do you explain yourself to other people? "Hi, my name is so-in-so. [Fill in the blank]." "I'm married." "I have kids." "I am a lawyer..." How we explain ourselves may indicate our identity. See, idolatry is building your life on anyone or anything other than Jesus...

What has caused you to be angry at God? "God, how dare you let me lose my job!" "How dare you let my spouse die!" "How dare you let me not have children!" "How dare you let my children wander away from you!" "How dare you let those people say those things about me!" What you're saying is, "God, how dare you take my idol."

What do I want to have more than anything else? That's a good question to ask yourself—the proverbial genie-in-a-bottle question. If I came up and said, "One wish: anything you want." Is it, "Love Jesus"? You go, "Well, no." Okay, then, that's the wrong answer...

What do you make the biggest sacrifices for? Time, energy, money, effort, long hours, lots of money, devotion. What's on your mind when you can't sleep? What are you thinking about? Is it Jesus?

Whose approval are you seeking? Is it Jesus?

And what do you treasure the most? What is the one person or thing that if taken from you—that would ruin everything? Is it Jesus?

<https://www.covenanteyes.com/2012/02/13/how-do-you-identify-your-idols/>