

Lawful Hobbies That Have an Idolatrous Place in Your Heart

by Don Johnson

The sermon explores how lawful hobbies can become idolatrous distractions, urging believers to seek freedom through repentance and focus on God.

Duration: 12:18

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, Matthew 6:19-21, 1 Corinthians 10:23, James 4:8

Topics: "Idolatry", "Repentance"

Description

This sermon shares a personal story of how a lawful hobby turned into an idolatrous distraction, leading to a deep spiritual struggle and eventual repentance. It emphasizes the subtle ways Satan can use even good things to divert us from God's purpose, the importance of recognizing and surrendering idolatrous affections to God, and the freedom and spiritual awakening that comes from true repentance and seeking God's forgiveness.

Transcript

Some of you heard the story, but I want me to share it again. I hope I can do so for the glory of God. Several years ago, when I was just a young minister, I had a parallel interest in my life that was collecting relics.

It was a hobby. Wasn't that I? In fact, it was started out an innocent hobby as something of kind of a. Interest that I've had ever since I was a little boy, Indian artifacts, and I started collecting and gathering these things up. And of course, even as when I entered the ministry and I was in into the Christian life, I was seeking the Lord.

And I wasn't aware of the scripture. And I didn't know the implications at that time that Satan is very subtle. And if he can't get you down and distracted and diverted with something overtly wicked, he will use something very good to do it or something that's lawful.

That's why we have that verse in 1 Corinthians 12, 13, that says all things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought into the power of anything. It's when you get brought under the power of something, you can be brought under the power of something.

Let me tell you, as I began to collect these artifacts slowly by slowly, they began to occupy an idolatrous place in my life. I mean, I started setting my affections too heavily upon them. And they began to occupy not only too much of my time, but too much of my thoughts, because my thoughts ought to have been toward employing my time what? Praising God.

What? Focusing on God. Using my energy seeking the Lord. And here I was getting diverted and pulled away in this lawful hobby.

Not that again that a hobby such as fishing or golfing or whatever can get out of place, but so easily we are of such a nature that even lawful things can soon slip in and grab our hearts. And that's what would begin to take place in my life. My collection was growing and I was proud of that collection.

Again, I had these things hanging all over my wall. I remember one day I was looking up, admiring and worshipping my relics. Not in the sense of bowing before them really in true worship.

Because here again, this was a subtle thing that was slipping in that was a distraction. Diversion. A lawful bondage.

It had me gripped at the time. And I remember the Lord spoke to me as I was looking at a frame of airheads. I remember the frames and I remember the airheads that was on the frame.

When the voice of God said to me, Don, you're going to give this up. I didn't want to think that it was the voice of the Lord. Because how could you give something up? How can you get better or do anything without the Lord unless he helps you and does it for you? Well, I remember the Lord said, you're going to give this thing up.

Okay. I said, you know how you tend to say, well, was that the Lord? How do you know whether it was the Lord or not? Is that the Lord? That's just my subconscious just trying to say something to me that I really don't want to hear. What is it? Is that the Lord? Well, does it come to pass? About two weeks from that point, a fellow called me on the phone and said, I hear you've got a nice relic collection.

I'm building a museum. He was a very wealthy man. He said, I'd like to come over and look at your relics.

I had a very fine collection. I said, sure, come over. He came over and looked at the collection and said, how much do you want for them? I said, I don't want to sell them.

He said, I'll give you an excellent amount of dollars for them. I said, whoa. Nah, I don't want to sell them.

And he said, well, here's my phone number. And he said, you think about it. I'll call you tomorrow.

And I told my wife, I said, May, I said, Mr. Knister Hodges has offered us, we've got to have much money for this. And I said, we could build a house and we could do good with this. I said, but I don't want to sell them.

But he called back the next day. Well, my heart was entangled. It's so subtle how you can be a Christian and go to church and read your Bible and preach sermons, and yet your heart be diverted and entangled with the affairs of this life.

Some of you are in that condition this very morning. You're very faithful outwardly, but you're entangled in something. God forbid.

Maybe you can get loose. I don't know what it is. But you know if you're entangled in something.

Well, he called me back the next day and said, Don, what do you decide? And I said, Mr. Hodges, I said, I appreciate your offer, but my wife and I talked about it. I don't want to really sell them. I wasn't trying to sell them, and I've been collecting these things all my life.

But I said, if you were to give me something like \$5,000, \$7,000 more, because I kind of went through an inventory of them and thought, well, if you give me more than they're worth, I would have to sell them, wouldn't I? And I said, if you'll give me, I thought I'd give him off my case. I'll just set a price that he'll just say, but forget it. Well, I set a price higher.

See, that's amazing how God in his infinite goodness can be curing you of something on one hand and helping you in another. Isn't he smart? Well, he called me back, and I told him I'd raise the ante. He said, Would you let me come and look again? I said, Uh-oh.

I said, Sure, come over. And he brought an appraiser, and they came over, and they looked at my relic collection. And he said, How do you want your money? My heart.

I said, Yeah, I don't mind. It doesn't matter. He started carrying those things off the wall and carrying them out in boxes.

They were my babies. They're gone. I began grieving, mourning.

I had to go up to my brother-in-law, Henry, who's sick with bone cancer right now. We should pray for him. I went up to my brother-in-law's after he got all my relics out of the house.

I had to go up there because he and I, he hunted together. We dug a lot in Indian caves together. He had a good collection.

I had to get some from him to have a fix, you know. Really, that's how bad it was. And so I got me some to look at so I wouldn't be completely without any.

And I was moping. And here it was. This happened in February in the winter back in the mid-'80s, May.

And I was down. I mean, I was discouraged. And here's the thing.

I knew the Lord was working on me. My wife rebuked me. She said, Don, you wouldn't be more upset if one of our children had died.

I was really grieving over the fact that I got rid of my relic collection. But the Lord had told me, You're going to give this up. Well, it was coming on Sunday, and I was pastoring a church, and I was preaching weekly.

And I was so out of tune with God and so grieved and so overthrown in this matter in my soul, I couldn't prepare anything. I couldn't get a message. I couldn't pray.

I couldn't sleep. I was sick. And what made me sick was that I knew that all of this, that my inordinate affection toward these things was wrong.

And I was sick about my spiritual condition. I was sick that I got rid of my relics. I was sick because the money at that time, so what? But here's the thing.

I couldn't eat hardly, couldn't drink, couldn't prepare a sermon. I was low, but I was overthrown. I was defeated.

And we had a group at that time that had come back from Bentley, Louisiana. I hadn't been with that week. I think God was doing other things with me.

But they came back, and they were just as filled with joy. And here I am, grappling as low as you possibly could be, overthrown in my heart. And these people come back from Bentley, Louisiana, and praising the Lord and rejoicing and happy.

And I'm defeated. It's not a very fun feeling when you see people around you that's got the joy of the Lord, and you're defeated. You're down.

And that's the way I was. I was down. And it was cold, and I went to the church that morning to turn the heat on.

I had an old army jacket on, blue jeans, and I was so discouraged and down and sick. And I walked into that church and turned the heat on. And I'll never forget.

God gave me the grace to fall down before Him. At the front of that church, I fell down and I said, Oh, God, He granted me repentance. He granted me the capacity to acknowledge my idolatrous relationship to that particular hobby.

I confessed it to Him as sin, and I asked Him to forgive me. I truly, from the bottom of my heart, repented of it and asked the Lord's forgiveness. And I'm telling you, that burden, that grief, that oppression, that bondage, just lifted off of me like a cloud.

Just lifted off. And I was free in my spirit. And I worshiped God in spirit and truth.

And folks, I'm telling you, to this day, I don't know what Paul saw or what Paul heard. He couldn't say what was unlawful. But let me tell you, in just a matter of split seconds, God revealed to me, into my spirit, things about the next world, things about heaven, things about the reality of life and death and heaven and hell, and all things godly.

I couldn't comprehend all the things that God was pouring into my soul. I've never been the same since. I was free.

I saw the brevity of life. I saw, lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. I saw there was only one purpose in living.

That morning, I didn't have a sermon, but I had a testimony. And I began to share that morning in the service what God had done for my soul in setting me free from a lawful hobby that no one would expect had entwined itself around my heart and defeated me as a Christian. And God moved that morning.

There were people standing up here and there saying, I've had this in my life and I've known it's wrong. I've been caught up in this particular sin and I've been trying to keep it a secret. It was an amazing thing how the Lord blessed that morning.

Such a spirit of awakening and reality took place that day. Praise the Lord! It's proof! I would never have done it, but the Lord God omnipotent saves! And He reigns. Is He your God? You know Him as Lord?

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/0TDFMDfKaHA.mp4>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/don-johnson/lawful-hobbies-that-have-an-idolatrous-place-in-your-heart/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net