

The Path of Idolatry

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman's sermon discusses the dangers of idolatry, its impact on both unbelievers and believers, and the importance of placing God at the center of our lives.

Duration: 48:20

Scripture: Isaiah 59:2

Topics: "Idolatry", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

This sermon delves into the dangers of idolatry, emphasizing the need to identify and eliminate idols in our lives. It highlights the progression of idolatry, from restlessness and replacing God with other priorities to the ultimate consequences of bondage and God's withdrawal. The key message is to crush the idols in our lives by exposing them to the light, seeking accountability, and refocusing our attention, adoration, and focus back to God.

Transcript

The message this morning is the path of idolatry. The path of idolatry. And idolatry is one of the biggest struggles that you will ever face.

It was Martin Luther who said, let me find it here because it's important. You cannot violate the other nine commandments without breaking this one first. It's that important.

If you think, well, what is that commandment? Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Once you violate that commandment, all other nine commandments will be violated. And that's the starting process.

The path of idolatry. I read this poem, I think a year or so ago, and I'm just going to do a short version. And it's really about addiction, but I thought of this immediately when I'm talking about idolatry.

It says this, I destroy homes, tear families apart, take your children. That's just a start. I'm more costly than diamonds, more costly than gold.

The sorrow I bring is a sight to behold. Just try me once and I might let you go, but try me twice and I will own your soul. You'll forget your morals and how you were raised.

I'll be your conscience. I'll teach you my ways. I'll be your master.

You'll be my slave. I'll even go with you when you go to your grave. Now that you have met me, what will you do? Will you try me or not? It's all up to you.

I can bring you more misery than words can tell. Come take my hand. Let me lead you to hell.

I'm convinced that we need to get back to the realities of eternity. Because unbelievers, I'm going to talk about obviously the bulk of the sermon. I was actually up at three this morning.

God woke me up. This whole page I added. And I don't like when he does that because it ruins my flow.

But when it's a burden on my heart, you have to let that burden go through the preaching or it will stay. The burdens stay until I release them. And I realize that when it comes to unbelievers, I talked to quite a group yesterday.

Their idols are leading them to hell. The idol, the idolatry is leading them to hell. And people often ask, well, why does God send a person to hell? And I remind them, he doesn't send them.

They follow their false gods to hell. They follow their idol to hell. Let me, heaven and hell summed up.

You choose what father you want to obey. You choose who you want to be your master. You choose where you want to go and spend eternity.

And the thing about this topic, I mean, it's not popular. And if I were to interview most of you, I don't know of anybody in this room, maybe I'm sure there are, who would say, no, I don't believe in that. Do we believe in eternity? Do we believe in eternal darkness and separation from God? But the irony is, I believe it, but I'm not going to tell anyone.

That doesn't make a lot of sense. Now, I'm not a fan of standing on the corner saying, you're all going to hell, turn and burn. I don't know if that's quite, you know, I haven't, I want to be careful because God moves in many different ways, but we have to be careful too, because that's where Bible thumping, hellfire and brimstone comes from, is you're not showing people the love of Christ, and then you can better explain eternity and separation from Christ in hell.

If all you're preaching is a mean gospel, that's not necessarily the heart of God. But we have got away from that. It's almost like pastors are hoping people will realize there's a hell by reading their Bible.

Let me encourage you to read your Bible so you'll find out yourself when he's given us the command to tell people about it. Charles Peace was condemned to death row in the United States. A pastor mentioned hell as he was walking him down death row.

I think it was the electric chair back then, and he mentioned the passage about hell. And this condemned criminal tapped him on the shoulder and said, sir, do you mind asking a question? Do you mind me asking a question? Do you believe what you're reading? He said, of course I believe what I'm reading. Then the condemned criminal said, if I believe what you believe, I would crawl on my hands and knees to the four corners of the world across broken glass to warn people of such an eternity.

It was it was hard putting this together this morning because many people come to my mind. It's almost this vision of walking to a cliff and falling over into eternity. And how do you rescue them? You can't just preach at them.

You've got to be filled with the spirit of God so God can dividely right. You love them and you tell them where this path is leading. But once you get the heart of God in you, you have to tell them the reason we don't preach hell is because we don't have heaven within.

Because when you truly are filled with God's spirit, you want to share the heart of God. And the reason we don't want to talk about hell is because we don't want to offend. We don't want to be.

Oh, there's that guy again. Now, I don't want everybody rushing out of here just, you know, condemning and preaching hell. But we have to help people understand, OK, listen, you are living for eternity.

Listen, I've talked to people who wind up with guns to their head and say, Shane, the only reason I haven't done it is because I know that I'm going to end up somewhere. We know and it's our job to help people point them in the right direction. What about if throughout my day I talked about a certain subject 13 percent of the time? You know, that's a lot, right? So one, let's say 13, we'll make it easy because I'm not a numbers guy.

I didn't do well in math. One tenth of everything I talk about, my wife would eventually get sick of it, right? And say, stop talking about that. You talk about that 10 percent of the time.

For every nine conversations, you talk about this. For every nine conversations, you talk about this. Well, Jesus talked about hell and condemnation and judgment 13 percent of all of his recorded words.

He said that 13 percent is focused on judgment. He said, don't fear, don't fear him who can kill your body, but fear him who can cast both body and soul in hell. I mean, if we truly believe it, wouldn't we tell people that? Wouldn't you kind of ruffle their feathers a little bit and say, you need to think about where you're spending eternity.

That's a very important thing. J.C. Ryle, he died, I believe, in 1900, so 117 years ago. He said, beware of new and strange doctrines.

We think we have them now. They had them back then, too. Beware of new and strange doctrines about hell and the eternity of punishment.

Beware of manufacturing a God of your own. A God who is all love but not holy. A God who has a heaven for everybody but a hell for none.

And that's what we want to present. See, I've got to make the gospel as appealing as possible. You know, come to Jesus and everything will be great and wonderful and we want to paint this Picasso.

Right? Oh, well, who wouldn't choose that? But the real message of the gospel is Christ died for us. A Savior rescued us from the punishment of God, the wrath of God. And it's a very interesting thing to learn.

You look at God being holy and righteous, and a holy, righteous God says, I can't dwell with sinful people. I'll fix that problem for you. I'll bring my Son into the equation to take the wrath of God, to take that punishment for you.

All you have to do is believe and repent and embrace that gift. That's why I don't understand why people are so upset at this topic. But I do understand because the darkness hates the light.

And they don't want to, you know when you remind somebody, right, if you tell your kids, listen, when we get home, you're cleaning your room. Well, all day, they're going to be, don't go home yet. You remind them of that and people say, I don't like the hellfire and brimstone type preaching and I don't know, don't be surprised here, but I've been labeled that.

Okay? And it just might be a shocker for some people. But I get those emails and I want to say, you know why you don't like that? Because you're convicted. Let's just be honest.

Let's be real. Because see, when you're honest and real, you can get to the heart of the problem. And if that convicts you, why? Why does it convict you? Because you're not ready.

Of course it convicts. When true spirit-filled Christians hear the glories of heaven and the reality of hell, they say, man, we need to hear it again and again and be reminded of it. The conviction will show you where your heart's at.

And one of the things that you talk about the heart of God is many of us don't like begging, do we? Pleading. Have you ever seen somebody pleading? It's kind of ugly, you know, and unless it's for a good reason sometimes, but they're just kind of, you know, pleading, please, please. And it can be a good thing.

Mothers, fathers do this to their sons. Please don't do that. Please don't go out with them.

Please. And this pleading. But did you know that God pleads? If you read Scripture, God will plead.

Deuteronomy 5.29, oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear me and always keep my commandments. That oh isn't in there just because they have filthy space. The oh is this heart-wrenching, oh God, if you would just hear me.

He is God, so He doesn't say that. He just says, oh, oh, if you would just hear me, just hear me, children, turn to my commandments. But why does God do that? I don't know.

All I know is when God set creation in motion, He set truth in motion. You have to line up with truth. Truth doesn't conform to you.

So once He sets this in motion, oh, that you would just turn, turn and do my commandments and fear me, always walk in my commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children. I am not willing that any should perish, but that all come to repentance. That's the heart of God.

And I don't have all the answers. I'm pretty sure this is one of them the atheist is going to ask me at the debate or a Q&A is going to come up. How can a loving God this? Why couldn't God just program everybody to go to heaven? But it's deep.

If you read deep philosophy like Ravi Zacharias and these guys that I rewind their messages four times, okay, I finally got it. Or I can just name off those guys, you know, apologetics with PhDs. But they explain very well, much better than I can, that true love has to make a decision.

If God, He could create robots. But to truly love someone, you have to show them what love is. So He has to give, the man has to love God.

And what's the other side of love? Hate. You can't have love without hate. You can't have good without evil.

God created us to worship Him and in that fallen nature, He calls man back to Him. True love cannot create robots. And are you glad you're not a robot? I am.

I am. Just come up here and preach and go home. Come and preach and go home.

And just, we're going through like a machine. Creation says bow your knee. We just look out there, but man says I will not.

Conviction says surrender, but man says I will not. Again, beware of idolatry. Beware of idolatry.

And for the believer, now that's the foundation for an unbeliever. A believer, well what's the big deal with idolatry, Shane? Well, the big deal is, idolatry is hell on earth. Now we all struggle with idolatry, and I'm going to explain the definition in a minute, but idolatry is hell on earth.

Instead of joy, there's depression. Instead of peace, there's anxiety. Instead of spirit-empowered living, you are barely holding on.

When the idol's on the throne and God is on the back burner, that's what idolatry is. It's putting anything, anything where God should be. The reason a believer is miserable is because they are worshiping a false God.

How can a believer have joy and worship a false God? And here's what we do. Here's my idol, my priority, my time, my energy. This is the center of my life.

Oh, and I have God over here for Sundays and stuff. You know, it gets difficult. But my idol takes, and who knows, sports, entertainment, leisure, career, anything that is an all-consuming, all-consuming passion of my life is the idol.

And that takes my time, my energy, my resources are devoted to that idol. But I have God back here, right? I'm talking about the believer now. And he's okay back there on the back burner, right? But I like the chicken chow mein on the front burners, not God back here on the back burner.

So that's what idolatry is, it's putting something before God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me, before. In other words, they're putting something before God.

Now this happens, I see it all the time in sports. You know, the guy or the kid's so involved that, well, we'll get to church once a month, but he's got to be the next superstar, or she's got to be the next, and that's our idol. Now, how can you still be involved in sports? You put God first, and then let everything fit in.

God, you're first, so these things take a back seat. God, you're first, so my career takes a back seat. The career's not my idol, you're my, well, idol's not the right word.

You're my God, and my pursuits will stand behind you. You go before me. So when God says you shall have no other gods before me, that's what he means, you're putting them first.

Kyle Eidelman, no relationship, I emailed him a while back and he said it's not, so that's all we can go from now. He wrote many good books I would recommend. He said, what if I told you that every sin you're struggling with is because of idolatry? I had to chew on that for a little while.

Every time I teach on this, I chew on that one, but I haven't found where that can be inconsistent. Because you look like what you worship. You will look like what you worship.

What is first in your life? Your lifestyle will resemble that. So now I'm getting finally to the part in Acts 7, is where we're at in the book of Acts, the path of idolatry, Acts 7. But before I get there, from last week, Stephen was accused of blasphemy, but he's simply breaking down the nation of Israel and their history, and he left us with this thought last week.

Moses received the commandments of God, but the children of Israel did not obey, and in their hearts they turned back to Egypt. What happens when in our hearts we turn back to Egypt? What's Egypt? Egypt is the bondage and the slavery. For those of you who weren't last week, here's what happened.

The children of Israel were delivered from their bondage and from their slavery, but then when it got tough, we're hungry. We're thirsty. We need to go back to the leeks and the onions and the beautiful things in Egypt.

We forgot about the chains around our head and neck and feet. We forgot about the bondage and the slavery. We forgot about all that.

We want to go back to that. And that's what the enemy will often do. He'll present the good old days, when they weren't the good old days, and he'll have you want to go back into bondage.

So idolatry is extreme reverence, love, or devotion towards something that takes a great deal of our time, energy, and resources. It becomes the center of our lives. And what I mean by, as we all have to struggle with this, is because we can see an idol creeping in sometimes.

Do you ever come to that, like, I haven't been to church in a while, I haven't read my Bible in a while, I haven't really spent time with God in a while. This other thing has crept in and came before God. So once we recognize it, we dethrone it, we put it back to where it needs to go, and we put God in the forefront again.

So it is a battle, because the enemy is going to come and sidetrack you with idolatry, putting something before God, because you look like what you worship. Have you ever seen that dark, gothic music? No, not in the 9am, 11am, this might, let me see, what would work for the 9am early risers? Lady Gaga. The groups, that doesn't work for you guys either.

But those who follow and love and idolize resemble it. The gothic, they idolize it, the dark makeup, the dark hair, the dread and the jewelry, the dog chains for necklaces, and they look like what they worship. Those who worship their career, what's it look like? Look at that house, look at that car, look at these things.

I just, I heard from somebody the other day that said, my dad won't even let my mom drive his car. It just sits in the garage six days a week, and if somebody drives it, he goes over with a fine tooth comb, makes sure there's no scratch on it. Idolatry, that's worship, you look like what you worship.

Think about that, isn't that powerful? Hosea, the prophet, told the children of Israel, you will become an abomination like the thing you love. Many of these protests that we're upset about, they are becoming what they love. The worship is a reflection of that.

So Acts 7.40, the people said, make us gods to go before us, for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him. So Moses goes up to the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments. Can you believe it? Of all things, he's not gone a year, he's gone 40 days, and the people already say, well, we don't know what's happening with this guy.

He's going to be gone a while, or he's not coming back. So what do we do? Seek God? No, let's put all our gold into a pile and melt it and build a calf. How could they? Right, we don't have little statues, we park them in the garage.

What's the difference? You don't have a little Buddha on your shelf, but you have a whole wall called an entertainment center, and we bow down and we worship these things. Shane, are you saying my television's wrong? What priority is it in your life? I just watched a good movie, Woodlaw, this week. I watch that one a lot.

There's good movies. It's okay, relax. But when it becomes everything, and that's your idol, and that's what you're living for, people are living for entertainment.

I would say the majority of America is living for entertainment. How do you know, Shane? You work all week, you go drink it over the weekend. You work all week, you go blow it over the weekend.

They're always looking for the weekend, aren't they? Most people, they're, I gotta go here, I gotta do this, and it's working for and toward idolatry. Make God's before us, for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him. And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the work of their hands.

Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets. Did you offer me slaughtered animals and sacrifice during the forty years in the wilderness? O house of Israel, you also took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of your God, Remphan, images which you have made to worship, and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. And I couldn't even get out of that passage all week.

Everything just started coming. Steps of idolatry. Here's what happens.

To be forewarned is forearmed. That's why I spend so much energy forewarning. Because then you're forearmed.

You go, aha, I remember what the Bible says about this, I'm walking right into this trap, aren't I, Shane? Yes, you are. What about the encouragement? The encouragement often comes after obedience. I've talked to so many people who are walking out of God's will, they're not even close to God's will.

I mean, they're just out and left field believers that are just miserable. What, I just need to be encouraged. Yeah, get back on the center of God's will.

That's encouragement. That's very encouraging. Now you pick people back up, the fallen, the fallen, listen, just get back up.

God loves you. His grace, his mercy. Get back and go in the right direction.

But that's where the peace comes from, is getting people back in the right direction. So after 10 minutes, 15 minutes, oh, a lot more than that, 20 minutes, are you ready for the path of idolatry? Here's another

challenge. Every one of these points I could make a whole sermon out of.

So I'm just going to go briefly for you. Step one, the path of idolatry, here's what to avoid. The people became restless.

Idle hands. Have you heard that saying? Idle hands are the devil's toolbox, the devil's playthings, the devil's whatever. And that's very true.

Idle hands. When people have nothing to do, they find something wrong to do often. Kids, right? Don't be bored a lot.

Get busy doing something. Idle hands are not good. The downtime is an opportune time.

So the enemy will look for opportune times, like he did in Jesus' life. And if a person's working hard, let's say I've worked hard all day, I've come home, get ready, take a quick shower, go to the study, eat dinner, pray with my kids, go to bed, repeat. I'm staying busy.

I'm working hard. But when that downtime comes, and the mind starts wandering, that's what happened to children. Just sitting around the fire out in the wilderness.

We didn't even bring any wine. From Egypt. What are we going to do out here? There's a cannabis bush.

What are we going to do out here? That's what they're... I'm not encouraging any of that. I'm saying that's probably what they're thinking. And that's maybe what they're doing.

We don't know. But restlessness, idolatry always comes up. When you find a man or woman working hard for God, not work becoming the idol, but God being the focus, and involved in ministry, involved in outreach, involved in people's lives.

When you're busy, it's hard for the devil to find an opportune time. But come that downtime, that restlessness, and the waiting, they couldn't even wait 40 days. What's wrong with these people? We can't wait four days sometimes.

If God isn't moving by day four, we're moving. I didn't hear from God. So be careful.

Restlessness. Because what consumes your mind controls your life. When you're bored, you want to go back to Egypt.

I don't know. The mind is such a complex thing. I've read a lot of books on cognitive behavioral things from a biblical perspective, and how the mind works, and the memory, and the cells, and all the... It's a masterpiece.

I mean, God created something that is mind-boggling, right? The mind. And how it works, I'm not sure, but we do know this. What consumes your mind controls your life.

When you're bored, you want to go back to the things that you were in slavery with. That's why Hosea said they became an abomination like the thing they loved. The next point, from after step two, they begin to replace God, and we already talked about this.

They made a golden calf. So what would it look like for us when we replace God? I don't spend much time with God anymore. Something else has replaced my time.

Church is a consideration, or Bible study, I'll get to it when I get to it, or seeking God, or praying, I'm just too busy for that right now. So something else replaces Him. So He gets you restless, a step of idolatry, and then you're too busy.

That's why I often say if you're too busy to follow God, you're too busy. Something needs to be cut out, and people don't like to hear this. But it's true.

It's true. You have to remove those things. And then that leads us right into step three.

They offered a sacrifice to the idol. They offered a sacrifice. They put the idol first.

I've got to offer a sacrifice. Why do they have to offer a sacrifice? I wish I had time and I could show you all the different sacrifices that people do around the world. You'd be amazed at the type of weird things that people do.

And they look at America, and they're like, you do weird things too. It's just weird. I mean, with their eyelids, and hanging in front of their skin, and blood, and how they work.

Just look. Why is that? Because you were created to worship. You have to worship.

I don't worship. Yes, you do. You worship yourself if you say that.

There's a worship in us. That's why Paul said in Romans, starting out chapter 12, I beseech you, I beg you, here we go. That word again.

I beg you, brethren, present your bodies as living sacrifices, what is holy and reasonable to God. That's the only way to get through life, is to put my body as a living sacrifice to God. I'm going to work hard.

I'm going to save. I'm going to use wisdom. But God, I'm putting my body out as a living sacrifice.

What do you want me to do today? What do you want me to do this week? I don't want to put anything before you. I'm sacrificing my life. We don't teach that much either.

Carrying your cross, sacrificing your life. But what I've noticed, and it's a challenge for me, when you sacrifice your life, and you just give it to God, and you're like, Lord, whatever you want to do, financial difficulties come. That's God's problem.

I sacrifice my life. Relational problems, Lord, you take care of it. We can say it, but unless you've lived it, that's truly what happens.

The reason sometimes we get worried about financial or relational is we know we messed up. And we're convicted about it. But when you say, God, everything is yours, it's His will, it's His bill.

Everything is His when you give that area of your life over. And I thought about, what about the sacrifice of the unborn children on the altars of pleasure and convenience? You know, that's what drives the abortion industry, right? Here's another topic you're not going to hear very often. Why is that? Pleasure and inconvenience, I'm going to abort the mistake.

We sacrifice often. Then step four, pride is always behind it. Pride is always behind it.

What did these people do? They rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Anytime you have to say, look at what I did, look at what I accomplished, look at, it's about me. It's about me.

The idol is ready to come right in. Because behind all the idols I described, entertainment or the guy with this car or all the business or career, all of it behind is pride, right? How can humility be behind all that? Humility would be the opposite of sacrificing ourselves. So be careful when pride raises its ugly head, cut it off real quick.

How? How? Repent. See, the wonderful thing about idolatry, as soon as you expose it to the light, it melts. Expose your idol or your idol will expose you.

Have you thought about that before? Expose your idol. So many people, we hide behind it because we don't want to expose it. Step five, I knew this sermon wouldn't get a lot of amens.

That's all right. It's going to challenge a lot of hearts. Step five, idolatry causes God to withdraw.

Here's the part that is scary. Idolatry causes God to withdraw. Have you ever tried to help somebody and you're helping them and you're helping them, at some point you've got to say, I have to withdraw.

Now God, O'Shea, He's a loving God, always there, exactly. But there does come a time and a place where God will actually say, you want it? You got it. I'm withdrawing.

Is not my ear heavy that I cannot hear or my hand short that I cannot save? But your sins have hidden His face from you and your iniquities have turned Him from you. So that's what can happen. Idolatry causes God to withdraw.

That's what the Bible says. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the hosts of heaven. This is no different than astrology or horoscopes today.

You look at people meddling with this. It's idolatry causes God to withdraw. And sadly on this issue, many seek direction from everything and anything but God.

But here's encouragement. Here's a prayer God will answer in this state. God, help me.

That's a prayer He will always answer, always answer. God help me. And from a sincere heart, He'll answer that prayer.

But what happens is we don't see help in five minutes, so we say, well, forget it then. A heart that truly says, God, help me, you'll persevere, you'll get through it, you'll wait on God. Idolatry causes God to withdraw.

And then the sixth point, idolatry leads to bondage. Idolatry leads to bondage. What we just read, did you offer me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during 40 years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? So God's saying, yes, you did.

You offered me, do you know why they did the sacrificial system in the Old Testament? That was the shedding of the blood covered their sins in the Old Testament there. So God says, did you offer me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during 40 years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You also took up the tabernacle of Molech and the stars of your God, Raphan, images which you made to worship, and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. So God says, I don't want to, that's not what I want to do.

But when you begin to get involved in idolatry, you go back into bondage. When a drug becomes the idol, oh, there we go. What is this? That's drawings of Molech.

They would heat the fire and put the baby on the arms of Molech. Child sacrifice. Yes, let it sink in.

Because the children of Israel are worshipping God. They're supposedly worshipping God. They're making sacrifices, but then they go to offer to Molech.

Thank you, Christine. That's good on that one. So that's what they're doing.

They're offering to God, but they're going back to Molech. They're offering to God, they're going back to Molech. Why is that? Because they had religion, not a relationship.

And that's what happens. That's why many people, do you ever see people all try God out for a season? They try him out, they have religion, but not a relationship. They don't know him, so they go back and forth and try these different things.

So be very careful. Idolatry leads to bondage. So once we put the idol on the throne, God will convict us.

How does he convict us? Well, it's happening right now. Is one way. Through the Word.

Now you'll notice this, when people are in bondage or in idolatry, they don't want to read the Bible. Now you might catch them praying because they're praying according to what they want to pray for. But you won't see them reading the Bible, seeking God, because the idol has taken center stage.

And when they put an idol in front of their life, they go into bondage to it. Don't we see this all the time? When something becomes an idol, something we drink, or a pill they take, and that becomes the idol, eventually what will that lead to? Bondage in that area. What happens here is this is confusing worship.

These worshipers are confused. They're worshipping both God and Molech. They're worshipping God and the stars.

They don't know who to worship. They're just worshipping. That's what idolatry does.

It confuses your worship. I gave these examples a few years ago and I found them again. I want to just show you what idolatry does.

Have you ever heard the name, or does it ring a bell, Ariel Castro? He kidnapped three women and held them for ten years. He admitted that a deep addiction to pornography influenced his actions. His idol promised pleasure but brought destruction.

I believe he killed himself in jail. What about power, success, recognition? All these things that people are looking for. I've never met a powerful executive or somebody wealthy who was happy at the end of their life who didn't know God.

They realize all is vanity. All is vanity. A couple years ago in celebration of Michael Jordan's 50th birthday, writer Wright Thomas spent some time with Michael and he said this.

He said, I would give up everything now to go back and play the game of basketball. When asked how he coped with the devastating fact that he will never be who he was, Jordan states, You don't. You learn to live with it.

And he ended the article with this, The man has left the court, but the addictions won't leave the man. So now that we've ruffled feathers, what's the final step? The final step is really where I wanted to focus this morning. That's why I wanted extended worship.

You have to kill the idol. The idol has to be dethroned. And here's what happens on this point.

We hear this, right? And that makes good sense. But we don't kill the idol. We just put it in a different spot.

We go home. Okay, you're no longer on the front shelf, but I'm not throwing you in the trash can. I'm going to put you back here in this side room.

So every time we walk down the hallway, Oh, there he is. Darn all. Anyway, we'll leave.

That's not, that's playing with the idol. That's playing with the idol. And you can never play with those idols.

The person I drove to see a couple hours drive the other day, actually Friday. That's what kept, he kept falling into it. That idol was not cut.

He kept saying three, four months ago by, he goes, I can have a drink now just to relax. Back into bondage. I can do that now.

Can I? Back into bondage. So we don't dethrone the idol often. We'll put them in a different room.

Yeah, we know we got to move from center stage, but we don't eradicate that idol. What does God say to do with idols? Crush them. Crucify them.

You don't continue to play with them. You've got to crush the idol. And for some people, it's a lifelong struggle.

You're going good. And here comes the idol again. You little stinker.

Where are you coming? Here it comes again. Remember this? Because the enemy will always come back to your weak areas. He doesn't try something you've done away with a long time ago.

He'll find the opportune time, and he'll present that idol. We have to kill that idol. So turn your attention, your adoration, and your focus back to God.

What is repenting? I talk about it often. It's a turning. It's a turning of mind, but it's also a turning from the way we live.

So if an idol is present in your life, you turn back to God. You turn your attention, your adoration, your focus, and everything back to God. So, for example, the person I was talking to.

I might as well use this as an example. If that is his idol, then everything now must be removed. Relationships that are pulling him back to the idol.

Lifestyle choices that are pulling him back to the idol. Back into church. I don't care if you have to go to church every single day.

Find a Bible study. That's why AA is so successful. Every day at a certain time.

Keep coming. Keep coming. The accountability.

But we don't do that when it comes to church. We think, in our sermon, I'm good. No, God's got to be everything.

An all-consuming passion, an adoration, attention, focus back to God. So you take the little idol, this thing. You crush it.

You get rid of it. And you begin to refocus on God. And restore that relationship.

Puritan author John Owen. I love this quote. I've probably quoted it six times now since we've started the church.

Secret lusts lie lurking in your own heart which will never give up until they are either destroyed or satisfied. There are secret things growing. And it doesn't just stay there.

It grows and grows until it is destroyed or satisfied. So that's the interesting thing with idolatry. You've got to expose it to the light.

You've got to expose it to the light. You bring it. And here's why we don't do it.

Oh, they're going to think I'm a failure. Listen, there's so much junk in this room right now, I wouldn't even know where to start. We know.

But we bring it. Hey, I'm struggling with this area. I have people every month, if not even sooner, that will text or call or say, Hey Shane, I'm struggling in this area.

A friend of mine lives out in Washington. He goes, Hey, I've been having a glass of wine every now and then. Now I have a bottle every night.

I'm exposing this. Would you pray for me? Would you text me tomorrow? Would you keep me accountable? He's exposing it. Or he goes to me, Listen, I don't know why, but lust is going crazy in my mind.

It's just something. The enemy is hitting this area. Would you pray for me? Can you talk to me? Go to your spouse.

They're going to be upset. Well, expose your idol now, or we'll expose you later. There's no getting around it.

We always want to hide things as if nobody will know. But that idol you're holding is growing. It's growing.

So when you bring it to the light, say, I'm struggling in these areas. They gave me Oxycontin or Vicodin or something for this, and now I'm wanting it every day. I've got to expose this idol.

You want me to keep going? There's a long list out there. I feel this hatred coming up and this unforgiveness. I hate this person, and I'm focusing so much on it.

Would you pray for me? Let me expose it. You're exposing the idol. You're crushing the idol.

I'm having these tendencies. Where are these tendencies coming from? You're exposing the idol. That's the only way to deal with idolatry.

You expose it. You give it to God. God, I'm struggling with this area.

We'll go share it with somebody. No. No.

You just gave the idol strength. Because it's the covering of pride. Listen, most everything I listed, I struggle with too.

I'm a struggler. So I will go to people and say, listen, I'm struggling here. This is coming up in my heart.

I don't like it. Would you pray for me? Would you hold me accountable? I mean, I've told the elders, the first and second servants, anytime they want, ask Morgan, how's the marriage going? How's Shane doing? Whenever you want. I've told Randy six years ago.

How? Ask. Open book. Because if I said, no, don't ask.

No, no, no. I'll just come show up and preach. You don't have to ask me any questions.

Because I know idolatry. And I expose it quickly. I've learned that lesson.

Expose it. But we don't want to. Why? Go back to what I talked about earlier.

Pride. Pride. This is interesting.

People often, one of the things they say, Shane, I like you're so transparent. And I say, I don't like I'm so transparent. You just teach the Bible.

I've mastered it all. How could you? And there are some teachers I listen to, I'm like, I've never heard them admit to anything. Or say they struggle with anything.

They've got wonderful Bible application. But no transparency. But pride gets in there.

I don't want to open up about struggles. I don't want to open up about things. I don't want to open up.

And that's how you crush the idol. There's a lot of, nowadays, even with affairs and adultery happening, people go, I can't believe it happened. I go, I can.

It happened a year ago. What do you mean it happened a year ago? That's where it started. Then that opportunity, that opportunity, excuse it, hide it, try to fight the idol on your own? Really? You're going to win that battle? So you expose it.

You expose it. You bring it to the light. I tell guys all the time, I'm struggling with lust.

Then stop going to the gym at 6 p.m. when everybody's there. Yoga pants are not a good thing. That's what we, let's just be honest.

You guys want to help with idolatry? You're like, what is he talking about? It's okay then if you don't know. But that's what, but see, you bring it to the light. You say, see, I'm looking for people who want to fight the devil, not keep falling.

That's who I'm trying to help. You got to be honest. You got to be real.

And then you know what they say? Well, I got to work out. Oh, well, okay, of course then. There's your other idol.

Six pack. See, we turn everything, we become idolatry. So we expose the idol.

Expose it. Say, I'm struggling. Could you imagine a church that starts saying, I'm struggling with this.

Pray for me. The devil would be, darn it. Devil, you can say darn it.

It's not the right word. Wrong word. But the devil would be upset, wouldn't he? This church is exposing their idols.

They're having their idols prayed for. The idols are losing power when it's prayed for. People say, pray, I'm struggling with jealousy.

Envy. Do you know those are, they don't call it the green-eyed monster for nothing. Those are terrible things.

And once you expose it, it loses its power. Doesn't mean it's not coming back later. But that's how you handle idolatry.

So as I close, think about this question. Has idolatry polluted your temple? I had to go back into an old thing I wrote about 12 years ago. And this is a true story.

I knew a man here locally. I think it was A.V. Hospital. He visited another man who was dying.

The man could no longer speak. He could, however, write. His desire was to be taken off life support.

Can you imagine that? You're dying in the hospital. You can't speak. And you're writing that you want to be taken off life support.

But what followed was more devastating. The man cried as he wrote. At the top of his list, he regretted that he had not spent more time with his family.

He was in anguish over the fact that he had not been a better father, but instead had built his life around other things. His idol promised success, but brought destruction. I mean, I don't know about you, but I can't think of anything worse than getting at the end of my life and realizing that the idol prevailed.

There's enough to regret as is, but to get to the end of your life and say, you won me. You won. You won.

I gave up my family. I gave up my marriage. I know God called me 25 years ago.

I gave all that up because of that. Now this might make a little bit more sense, what I read at the beginning to close. I destroy homes, tear families apart, take your children, and that's just a start.

I'm more costly than diamonds, more costly than gold. The sorrow I bring is a sight to behold. Just try me once and I might let you go, but try me twice and I will own your soul.

And you might say, Shane, this is too heavy. Man, you've got to back off a little bit. We just don't need to hear this.

The problem is, unless idolatry is exposed for what it is, there's rarely change. There's rarely change. Unless you tell people, if you're upset, show me one verse that encourages idolatry.

Or it's not a big deal. God would wipe out entire nations because of idolatry. There's parts in the Bible I read, I'm like, I don't know how God can do that.

I mean, what is happening there? But those nations were offering their children on the idol of Molech. They were killing their children. The drums would pound so you wouldn't hear the screaming of the children.

So God's judgment fell upon them for their idolatry. There are children who are crying themselves to sleep at night because mommy and daddy don't get along anymore. There's people running to all kinds of drugs and alcohol because of idolatry.

Listen, I've been to a few funerals when young adults overdose on heroin. It's not pretty. Why didn't somebody tell them the truth? Let them choose, okay, but why didn't they tell them the truth? The path of idolatry is not pleasantry.

It's not no big deal. It leads to destruction. The goal of that is to kill still and to destroy.

That's the goal of the enemy and he uses idolatry. Putting something before God. So what is God wanting you to remove? That is the question.

And what we'll start doing is making excuses, won't we? If you're in your mind right now saying, but, let me warn you. Yeah, but. Yeah, but.

That's a sign of pride. Yeah, but, I've got a hard day. Yeah, but, I've got a hard marriage.

Yeah, but, I've got a this. Be careful of that word, but.

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