

THE IDOL OF POWER

DATE: SUNDAY 8TH SEPTEMBER 2019 | SERIES: IDOLS - PART: 2

JEREMIAH 9:23-24

"Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.

NOTE TO LEADERS:

This is week 2 of our Idols series. Our focus idols this week is power. The aim of this week's group discussion is to help people move from self-reliance to God-reliance. Our key verse - Jeremiah 9:23,24 is a very powerful one, and the questions on this verse are ones we recommend. Pick and choose other questions that will work best for your group.

START TALKING

1. Share a phrase or a moment from this Sunday's message that is still resonating with you
2. When have you been keenly aware of someone else's power because you had little?

START THINKING

1. Someone defined the idol of power as: "I have a power idol if my worth stems from my recognition and power. I define myself by how I influence and impact the people around me." How much of that statement applies to you?
2. Read the Key Verse: Jeremiah 9:23-24. What is your biggest takeaway from this verse? What are we told not to do? And what are we told to do? What do these verses teach us about God?

START SHARING

1. On Sunday, Peter spoke about four positions we can have in relation to the throne of God.
 - Me on the throne and God not in the circle (non-Christian)
 - Me on the throne and God in the circle (carnal Christian)
 - Playing musical chairs - convenience (most Christians)
 - God on the throne and me in the circle (surrendered)

Which position do you find yourself in? (It will most likely be one of the first three listed). What do you need to do in order to 'right-size' God and put Him back on the throne of your life?
2. One of the challenging points from

Sunday was when Peter said that complaining is a good measure of us being on the throne of our lives rather than God. We expect the world around us to make us happy, and we complain when it doesn't. Are you guilty of complaining? How do you change this?

3. If you employ someone in your business or at your home, you are in a certain position of power in their lives. In what way can you exercise this power in a godly, Christ-like way?

START PRAYING

Ask God to search your heart and shine a spotlight on any idols in your life that you may not have recognised. Ask Him to lead you back into a relationship where He is in the rightful place on the throne of power: *Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* (Psalm 139:23,24)

START DOING

One of the best ways to deal with the idol of power is by looking for ways to selflessly serve others. Think of a way that you can serve/bless someone else who may not be able to do anything in return for you.

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, in part two of our Idols series, Peter Rasmussen shared a challenging message around the Idol of power. We certainly don't need to look far to see how power can corrupt people - there are some excellent examples of that in the world today. Lord Acton said: "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely". The key to dealing with our idols lies in this scripture: *"Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.* Jeremiah 9:23-24. The problem with the idol of power is not the abuse of power, but a misunderstanding of who we are in the light of who God is.

THE HAPPINESS PROBLEM

The top priority of God is His glory revealed. *"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."* Romans 11:33-36. The top priority of 'man' is our own happiness, and we will go to extraordinary lengths to achieve his goal. We will: destroy a marriage, hurt and abuse others, steal, and even kill! All to achieve our goal of happiness. But God is not committed to our happiness, He is committed to His glory.

So what's the problem and how does it speak to the idol of power?

We have replaced God with ourselves. When we remove God from His position of power then, by inference, we're all-powerful. To demonstrate this, Peter Rasmussen used an elevated chair (throne) in the centre of a circle of barstools.

1. Me on the throne and God not in the circle (non-Christian)

I am a God of my own domain, a creature living ignorant of the Creator. *"Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."* John 1:3. There are all sorts of problems that come with this position in that our own base desires are the driver of our lives, and we end up living driven by desire. *Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.* Romans 1:24-25.

2. Me on the throne and God in the circle (carnal Christian)

This scenario basically encapsulates the problem with the idol of power - we've invited Christ into our lives but with no understanding of submitting to Him. We demand that He makes us happy - it's the ultimate power trip! When we're in this position, we expect everyone to bow to our wishes. This position is often characterised by complainers - unless the weather, my colleagues, my family... the world, in general, obeys me, I complain! Complaining says something about where we're sitting - we're expecting the world to fit our needs.

3. Playing musical chairs - convenience (most Christians)

In this situation, we're happy to let God be on the throne until we don't like what He says - then we want control again. We pick and choose when we will surrender to His ultimate wisdom, and it becomes a relationship of convenience. *"For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot."* Romans 8:6-7. On broader inconsequential issues, we're quite vocal that people should obey God, but when it comes to deeper more personal things like our time, finances, location etc. we don't submit to Him.

4. God on the throne and me in the circle (surrendered)

Here, we no longer see ourselves as "god", but as a creature like everyone else. *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,*

whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Our source is God - just as it is for everyone else in the circle. And we're connected to each other because we share the same Father: *"submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."* Ephesians 5:21. We have no power over another, we're not superior to anyone. When we place God on the throne at the centre, our position with everyone else is right.

Right-sizing God

It is therefore critical that we right-size God or we could potentially wrong-size ourselves. *"For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned."* Romans 12:3.

THE ALMIGHTY GOD

God is Omnipotent. In our human understanding we divide power up, we see someone as having power in their domain, e.g. the South African government has power in its domain, the devil has power in his domain, I have power in my domain... But because we can't understand 'all power', we wrongly conclude that God has power only in His domain. But God IS all power. There is nothing anywhere that is not under His control. He is fully in control of His universe. Yet 'man' declares his omnipotence in the face of God and what do we get? Wars, tyrants and dictators. When power not submitted to the all-powerful One, it is corrupt.

God first introduces Himself to man as Almighty when he makes a covenant with Abraham: *"When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,"* Genesis 17:1. God is all powerful. There is nothing that God cannot do. *"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?"* Jeremiah 32:27. Everything is sustained by the power of God. When we think about these things, our minds fail us. At times how we seek to humanise God. Even when John saw the risen Christ, he fell as though dead. Everything, whether willingly or unwillingly, falls under the sovereign rule of God.

A LIFE OF WONDER

We are saved from the idol of power when we stay looking at Him. When awe and wonder overwhelm us, we right-size our own power. *"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"*" Isaiah 6:1-5.

John Ortberg said: "We live in an age that seeks to eliminate mystery, and then we miss it. We have caller I.D., we can know the gender of babies before they are born, exit polls tell us who was elected before we have finished voting. TV reveals the secrets magicians have always hidden. We destroy the wonder, and then we ache for it. But God is way too big for the wonder-killers." We can satisfy our desire for power by looking at the only powerful One. When we right-size God, all idols fade into insignificance.