

WHEN GOOD BECOMES ULTIMATE

EXODUS 32 | ERIC SIMPSON | MARCH 21, 2021

"A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living." – Tim Keller

Exodus 32:2-4

²Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me."³So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. ⁴He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

"The choice of a calf is not arbitrary. It was a common idol image in the ancient Near East...Specifically, it was thought that calves or bulls functioned as pedestals for the gods seated or standing over them. In this sense, the calf is analogous to the ark...it is unlikely that the calf itself is being declared "god" by the Israelites, as if they actually think that it has brought them out of Egypt. Rather, like the ark, it is the place above which God is enthroned, thus ensuring his presence with them. The calf is thus a pagan representation of the true God." – Dr. Peter Enns

Exodus 32:21-24

²¹ He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?"²² "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil."²³ They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.'²⁴ So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

"He's self-sufficient. Self-contained. God doesn't need anything. Or anybody. If all of us happen to fall off the face of the earth, God will still be exactly who He is. If all of us abandon our worship of Him, He'll remain the same. God's greatness doesn't depend on us. If not one single person on earth ever chose to respond to Him in love, believing in Him and worshiping Him, God would still be all that He already is, always has been, and always will be." – Louie Giglio

Three ways we relate to our idols: We love them, trust them, & obey them.

Identifying your idols (golden calf)...

1. "Your religion is what you do with your solitude." – William Temple

Where do your thoughts effortlessly go when you have nothing else demanding your attention?

What are you pre-occupied with these days?

What do you habitually think about to get joy and comfort in the privacy of your heart?

2. "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also." – Jesus (Matthew 6:21)

Where are you tempted to overspend?

What patterns do you notice in your spending?

If you trace the trail of your money, where does it lead?

3. Unanswered prayer and frustrated hopes.

How are you responding to those situations where you pray and work for something and don't get it?

Notice any explosive anger or deep despair? What's that revealing?

4. "Pull your emotions up by the root and you will often find your idols clinging to them." – Timothy Keller

Look at those uncontrollable emotions, the ones that never seem to lift, that drive you to do things you know are wrong.

Ask... "Why am I so scared of that? Am I threatened with losing something that I couldn't imagine living life without?"

Ask... "Why am I so down on myself? Is it because I've failed at something I believe is a necessity?"

Ask... "Why am I driving myself into the ground? Overworking, always pushing, never able to shut-it-off. Do I feel I must have this thing to be fulfilled and significant?"

Uprooting and replacing our idols...

Colossians 3:1-5

¹Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.