

Are These Idols Hidden in Your Heart?

"Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully" (Psalm 24:3-4).

My husband and I are preparing for a three month sabbatical (which will have begun by the time you read this blog). It is our sense that our most effective years of ministry lie ahead, and we have felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to spend some time in rest and play ... but also much time in silence and solitude ... drawing apart to hear clearly from God without being encumbered by all of our day to day ministry activity.

I never realized how difficult it would be to prepare to disengage and unplug from ministry for a season of rest and seeking the heart of God. As the time draws near for our departure (our first two weeks will be spent in Israel), there has been a sense of near desperation to "get it all done" and to "get ahead" on all of my deadlines, etc. As this process is taking place, I've discovered some serious iDolatry in my life. The iDols are iPhone, iPad, and iNternet. I had no idea how addicted I have become to the technology that is so pervasively important to the work I do—writing, posting, communicating, compiling newsletters, blogging, etc. Although I spend much time in prayer and the Word, I believe the usage of "devices" far exceeds the time I spend in heartfelt devotion. And, since I am committed to the disciplines of silence and solitude during much of our sabbatical time, I have been able to see how the enemy can easily distract me and trip me up here!

I was prompted to do a study on idols and idolatry as it would relate to my own lack of proper balance, and what I now know

has tempted me to cross the line into sinfulness. I have often trusted in the iDol of technology, which Psalm 24 warns about. It has quite literally become a false god in my life. 1 Samuel 12:21 says, "But do not turn aside, for *then you would be going* after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing."

And I want to scream out—"But they *aren't* useless—they are very useful to me!" And so, as I read "I am the Lord, that is my name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images" (Is. 42:8), I must wrestle with this! Technology is surely an iDol the enemy of my soul has used ... surreptitiously invading my day-to-day living, and covertly inserting a cancerous addiction to challenge my journey towards Christlikeness.

Certainly I use my phone, iPad and computer for God's purposes, but I also waste a lot of time uselessly becoming distracted by all of the amazing things the Internet has to offer me. Where is the balance that will help me to step back over the line I have crossed and put technology back into proper perspective? How am I to "...flee from idolatry" as Paul admonishes and to keep myself form idols, as John warns? I certainly don't want to "follow vain idols," forfeiting the grace that could be mine (Jonah 2:8).

As I prayed about this issue in my life, the prophet Jeremiah brought perspective: "*Are there any among the idols of the nations that can cause rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Is it not You, O Lord our God? Therefore, we will wait upon You, for You have done all these things*" (Jer. 14:22).

This verse makes me evaluate: Am I putting my hope in technology—giving it too much of my discretionary time ... looking at my email during meals with my family, asking Siri endless questions about this or that, pinning and Facebooking things that are not ministry related, etc.? There must be a

balance. As I unplug from it all during the sabbatical (I've already reduced my daily emails substantially by simply unsubscribing from MANY things I never have time to read and just spend time deleting everyday), it feels good-freeing! I actually am beginning to feel the weight lifting as I intentionally leave my phone turned off more, and am not checking Facebook "one more time" before going to sleep, etc. This allows my first and last thoughts of the day (as well as most of the time in between) to be tuned in to the voice of my Lord rather than to be turned aside by lesser things.

My prayer is that after several weeks of unplugging (as much as possible, since I realize there will be some need for it from time to time), my heart will be pure and my hands clean so that I may give myself to standing in the Father's holy place, fully committed to Him alone!

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