

Idols we never knew we had

7 – Family



Introduction

One of the greatest blessings that God gives us in this lifetime is the gift of family. Virtually every single person on the planet will tell you that “family” is a beautiful concept. When organizations of people with no biological ties are functioning really well, the environment is often described as “like a family.” When you see that type of praise used universally, it’s obvious that a blessing is inherently wonderful.

But is it possible that family ties could be *too* close? Can even family become a very real idol to us—a good thing that we’re tempted to turn into a god thing?

Abraham offers Isaac

Read Genesis 22:1-19

1. It would be incredibly difficult for any parent to go through something like this. What circumstances in the life of Abraham, however, make this request from God particularly heart-wrenching?
2. God’s request in this text is strange for many reasons. For starters, it seems contradictory to his offense elsewhere over children being sacrificed (see Deuteronomy 12:31). God did not really want Isaac to die. What was he seeking?
3. Imagine that you are in Abraham’s sandals. What would that experience be like?
4. After Abraham demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice Isaac, God intervened. He said, “Now I know that you fear God because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son” (v. 12). God did not need to learn what was in Abraham’s heart. Abraham was the one that needed to learn a lesson. What was the lesson?

5. How does the story of Abraham and Isaac culminate in Jesus?

6. One of the ways you know you're treating something or someone as a false god is if you're breaking the true God's commands in order to serve that thing or person. Let's come up with three ways in which idolizing family could lead to breaking God's commands.
 - 1.

 - 2.

 - 3.

Self-evaluation

- What is the most important relationship in your life?

- Is there a relationship in your life that is the primary determining factor in whether you are feeling up or down?

- Why does that person have such a powerful influence on your life?

First things first

Read Luke 14:25-27.

1. Hate family?! Jesus is using hyperbole here. How does Matthew 10:37-39 shape our understanding of what Jesus is saying in Luke's gospel?

2. We can love Jesus and our family in the right order. When Jesus is the most important relationship we have, that doesn't make my other relationships suffer; it actually makes them stronger. Apply this to the following relationships.

- Spouse
- Parents
- Children
- Friend

Christ gives family a whole new meaning

Read Romans 8:31-32.

1. What did God do to make you part of his family?
2. In Joshua 24:15, he says, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (v. 15). Being in a Christian home and among a Christian family is a great blessing in many ways. How is a Christian family one of the greatest blessings God gives to us on this earth?
3. Throughout the Bible, God refers to Christians as family. Jesus and the apostles address followers of Christ as "brothers and sisters." Why is it such a comfort for you to know that other believers are a spiritual family?

Next week: Religion