

The Watchman #7
Idols of the Heart

Word

Scripture Reference

Ezekiel 14:1-23

Discussion Questions

1. We often think of an idol as a wooden or porcelain statue that people worship or pray to. However, the biblical definition of an idol is that which replaces the worship of the One True God in priority and in practice. A good example is social media, which many of us spend too much time on, sometimes even more than we spend praying or reading God's Word. When you are engrossed with something or someone (e.g. career, advancement, next opportunities for growth and expansion, family, yourself) to the point that it takes priority over God in your life, then you are guilty of having an idol in your life. An idol of the heart is hidden in the privacy of your heart, and so it may not be as obvious as worshipping a wooden idol, and therefore unnoticed. Discuss the things or people that have taken over your Christian life at the expense of your time and relationship with the Lord.
2. Idols of the heart are worse than going to a temple to worship a wooden idol, that's why it is addressed in the book of Ezekiel. These idols have to be dealt with so that you can be an effective watchman of your generation and help the Church to continue to have an impact in the community. Read Ezekiel 14:1-23. God reproved the elders for having the audacity to come to Ezekiel, God's prophet, for advice while worshipping idols in their hearts (v. 1-3). What makes the idol of the heart so damaging is that it is hidden in a place no one can see. Discuss the following:

- a. **The DANGER: Idols of the heart cause us to sin (v. 4-5).** Although many idols of the hearts are not sinful by itself (e.g. Facebook, cars, sports, shopping, etc.), if these things have priority in your life over the worship of God or over the desire to please Him in your life, then they can lead you to sin. Discuss how some of these basic things in life could actually keep you away from God and lead you to sin. In what way can other people's lifestyle keep you from appreciating God's blessings in your own life? How can giving God the priority of worship in your life set a boundary in order not to stumble into sin?
- b. **The RESPONSE: Repent and change (v. 6).** According to God Himself, if you stumble into sin, the response should be of repentance and change, which means turning from it and having a change of mindset in the way you live. Discuss how you can turn yourself away from the idols of the hearts. Do you think you can survive if you give them up? Why? If you are in a relationship with a person who is taking you away from God, what should you do about it? What does repentance entail?
- c. **The REMINDER: God will take action to recapture the heart of His people (v. 7-8).** The Israelites were God's people and He wanted them back. The same can be said of you. You are His child, and He wants to recapture your heart because He loves you. The notion that God will allow you to continue to live in sin is wrong. He takes action in order to recapture your hearts. How does God take action in order to lead His erring back to Him? Why should you not wait until God takes action before you give up the idol in your heart?
- d. **The WARNING: God does not answer those who worship idols in their hearts (v. 9-11).** God has no obligation to answer the prayers of hypocritical people who come to Him with idols in their hearts. Discuss what you think of people who only come to God when they are in great need. Why is it important to check your heart before you come to God in prayer? Should you expect a Pastor or someone to take the responsibility of praying for you? Why or why not?

- e. **The CHALLENGE: To (individually) live faithfully in an unfaithful world (v. 17-23).** God is a patient God, but if there is persistent unfaithfulness in a Christian's life, the Lord will still take action and punish that person. God judges; however, He protects the righteous ones. Share how you as an individual can live faithfully to the Lord in this unfaithful world.

Walk

*Jesus, my Lord will love me forever,
From Him no pow'r of evil can sever,
He gave His life to ransom my soul, now I belong to Him;
Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me,
Not for the years of time alone, But for eternity.*

As a child of God, having been saved by grace thru faith in Christ Jesus, you belong to Him. He should be the only One to reign in your heart. No idol, a person or a thing, should take priority in your worship of Him. There are imminent dangers when you keep an idol in your heart. Come to God, allow Him to search your heart and see if there is anything there that has been keeping you from having a good relationship with the Lord.

Worship & Prayer

Heavenly Father, You are our creator God who is awesome, great, loving and faithful. You are the Only One who deserves to be worshipped because of who You are. We know this truth, and yet we are guilty of keeping idols in our hearts. Please forgive us. Help us to honor only You as our God who should take priority in our lives. Keep us away from anyone or anything that might make us unfaithful to you and would keep you from having you first and foremost in our lives. In Jesus' Name. Amen.