

Galatians

Return Church

Lesson #7

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

October 1, 2025

Our Higher Power

Does it really matter who your Higher Power is?

So-called gods

Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world? You are trying to earn favor with God by observing certain days or months or seasons or years. I fear for you. Perhaps all my hard work with you was for nothing. ***Galatians 4:8-11 NLT***

At one time when you had no knowledge of God, you were under the authority of gods who had no real existence. ***Galatians 4:8 Phillips***

Idolatry

- This is an amazing few verses.
- Galatians were falling under the influence of false teachers that were saying you have to trust in Jesus and obey the Jewish ceremonial laws in order to be saved.
- Paul is arguing against this idea. He tells them that they will fall back into slavery of the so-called gods. Who are the so-called gods?
- The pagans believed that behind every basic element like, earth, wind, fire, and water, was a god.
- Any basic thing like, money, sex, cows, the mountains, the sea, fire, your family, anything can be worshiped, or can be treated as a god.
- The principle is this, the only alternative to the gospel is idolatry.
- Either you have your creator in the center of your heart, or you have an idol.

First 3 steps to AA

- **Step 1:** We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
- **Step 2:** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- **Step 3:** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

That is so good and so true!

This is a great start!

Now let's try to understand who God is.

Who is God?

- Can anything you want be your Higher Power? Yes, you can put anything there.
- Can anything you want be God?
- There is only one God that created you, and that manages the universe.
- Can you create your own god? Sure, but don't mistake it for the real God. A tree, a dog, a cow, or any idol cannot love you, cannot save you, cannot help you or deliver you.
- You can make money a god, a person, your career, drugs, or sex. But all of these false gods will let you down, they cannot fulfill you or ultimately satisfy you.
- The real God is alive, and He is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent. He is eternal and infinite. He is a person.
- He can love you, heal you, talk to you, be your friend, save you, deliver you, answer your prayers. He is alive, He is real, and His name is Jesus.
- Do you want an impersonal, dead, relationship with a so-called god, or do you want a close, intimate, living, personal relationship with your creator, Jesus Christ?

Only 2 choices

- Either you have the real God in the center of your heart, or you can put a false god, or an idol there.
- Idols can be anything that you love, serve, and give your life to.
- What is idolatry? An idol is anything in my life that is central to me, anything that seems to be absolutely necessary, something that takes the place of God that I give my money to, that I serve, that I love.
- Idols are not necessarily bad things. They are good things turned into something that you have to have. A person can be an idol. Your ministry can become an idol.
- When something good becomes the best, it becomes an idol.

10 commandments

- You either believe in the true God, Jesus Christ, or you are a slave to worshipping something that you treat as a god but is not. (Idolatry)
- God gives us the 10 commandments to give us the parameters of how to live a good life. The 1st two commandments are about idolatry.
- When you go to God and say, I want to know how to live my life, the first thing he says is about idolatry.
- If you are breaking commandments #3- #10 it is because you are breaking commandments #1- #2.

The 10 Commandments

- 1. You shall have no other gods**
- 2. You shall make no graven images**
- 3. Don't take the name of the LORD in vain**
- 4. Keep the Sabbath Day holy**
- 5. Honor your father & mother**
- 6. You shall not murder**
- 7. You shall not commit adultery**
- 8. You shall not steal**
- 9. You shall not bear false witness**
- 10. You shall not covet**

I John

The 5 chapters of the book of I John is all about:

- Living in the light.
- Living in love.
- Living in God.

Then Apostle John ends the book with this verse.

*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen. **I John 5:21 NKJV***

This is the only time John mentions idolatry in the entire book.

John is saying, if you ever fail in anyway, or have any sinful problem, it all comes from idolatry. Our greatest enemy is idolatry. Our greatest danger is idolatry.

The reason for any sinful flaw in your life is idolatry

- When you fail to be like Jesus, when you fail to be honest, to be generous, to be kind, to be humble, etc.... It is because there is an idol in your heart. Ask yourself, what it is that I have in the place of God in my heart?
- When you commit sexual sins, or sins of greed or covetousness, it all has its roots in idolatry.
- Instead of saying don't do this, or don't do that, look at your heart and see what is taking the place of God in your heart. What are you adoring, what are you serving, what is your beauty?

Idolatry

- If God is not your center and your greatest joy, you are turning to other gods. Something is the center; work, job, beauty, romance, music, drugs, your independence, a good cause, your ministry, a family, without you I have no meaning, no worth, no significance.
- Is there anything sinful about pieces of wood or stone? No. they are good things that were formed into a god.
- If you build your life around a person, when they leave you or when they die, it will destroy you.
- When you create your own god, you are making a golden calf, like Israel did when Moses went up into the mountain.



THE GOLDEN CALF

◆ WHAT IS YOUR IDOL? ◆

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The Golden Calf

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him. And Aaron said to them, Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me. So all the people broke off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received *the gold* from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt! So when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, Tomorrow *is* a feast to the Lord. Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. And the Lord said to Moses, Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted *themselves*. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt! And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a stiff-necked people! Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. ***Exodus 32:1-10 NKJV***

A golden calf

- When you create your own god, you are making a golden calf.
- When your ideas about God are not Biblical and true, you are making a golden calf.
 - For example: I like the God of love and forgiveness, I like the God of "judge not." But I don't like the God that says, don't commit sexual sins outside of marriage. The god of my understanding doesn't say things like that.
- When any god, other than your creator, lives in the center of your heart, and you serve it, give to it, or adore it, you have an idol. You have a golden calf.

Idolatry

- King Solomons downfall was his pagan wives and their idolatry.
- Israels idolatry ultimately led to their destruction and exile.
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego got thrown into the fiery furnace because they stood against idolatry.
- In the book of Hosea, God likens our idolatry to adultery.
- In Jeremiah 2, God likens idolatry to sexual sins.
- Paul preached a great sermon against idolatry in Athens.
- This theme is throughout the entire Bible. The problem with humanity is idolatry. People simply have something else as their higher power other than Jesus Christ.

How do they enslave us?

- In the Bible we see how idols control us.
- This word lust in the Bible many times means an over-desire. Lust is an over-desire for something good, an idol says, if you have me, you will be happy,
- Whenever you feel like you are having to sin. Always look for the idol. I am bitter, and I cannot get rid of it, this person wronged me, this is killing me, but the reason you are bitter is not what the person did to you, but what your heart is making of the thing you lost. You feel like what you lost is what you had to have.
- It is not a normal size desire of something evil that is destroying you, it is an over-desire of something good.

Who is your higher power

- Who is the god of your understanding?
- It is a popular belief that you can make anything you want to be your higher power. That's fine for getting sober, but what about getting ready for eternity?
- Is your higher power a golden calf or is it the creator of the universe?
- The popular new age thinking is that there are many paths up the mountain, leading to God. Or that all of these different religions lead to the same God.
- Many people think Christianity is just another religion. And Jesus was a great man, a great teacher, our example, a prophet, the founder of Christianity.
- All other religions of the world have their leader show you the pathway to God. Except Christianity; where Jesus comes to you and tells you He is the pathway.

*Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. **John 14:6 NKJV***

Some other way

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. ***John 10:1 NKJV***

Most of the world is trying to climb up some other way:

- Billions of people in thousands of different religions, sects and denominations, all trying to save themselves, trying to patch up a righteousness of their own.
- Most of the world in one form or another, are trying to be good, or at least have their good out-weigh their bad.
- People join religions, trying to be good, moral and upright. Trying to walk a pathway to god.

Jesus is only the way!

Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus has been acclaimed as the greatest religious leader who ever lived, as being the most influential person to have lived on our planet, and as being unique to the degree that no one can be compared to Him.

Most all religions teach that Jesus lived 2,000 years ago in Israel and was a prophet, a great teacher, and a godly man. But the Bible tells us that Jesus was much more than this. The debate begins with the discussion about Jesus' full identity.

The real test of what one thinks of Him must revolve around who He claimed to be and what He accomplished during His brief time on our planet as a human.

He became a human being, died by crucifixion, and was buried, then after 3 days, He rose from the dead. He is the only, all-sufficient Savior of the world. He will come again to this earth. Who is Jesus Christ? **He is God.**

Jesus created all things

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ***John 1:1-3 NKJV***

....and through the Son he created the universe. ***Hebrews 1:2 NLT***

All things were created through Him and for Him. ***Colossians 1:16 NKJV***

You can put a tree, a cow, a person or money as your god, or you can get to know the real thing, the creator of the universe, Jesus Christ.

Do you believe that Jesus is God?

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ***Isaiah 9:6 NKJV***

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, ”which is translated, “God with us.” ***Matthew 1:23 NKJV***

Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. ***John 5:18 NKJV***

Jesus called Himself “I AM”

And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” ***Exodus 3:14 NKJV***

Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” Then they took up stones to throw at Him;. ***John 8:58 NKJV***

Jesus performed miracles

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know. **Acts 2:22 NKJV**

And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed *them* all. **Luke 6:19 NKJV**

And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched *it* were made perfectly well. **Matthew 14:35-36 NKJV**

Jesus performed miracles

- He turned the water into wine
- Jesus healed the several lepers
- He healed several blind people
- Jesus healed the deaf and mute
- He cast out demons many times
- Jesus calmed a great storm
- He walked on water
- Jesus cursed a fig-tree and it withered
- He fed thousands of people twice with just a handful of food
- He raised people from the dead: the widow's son in Nain, Jairus's daughter and his friend Lazarus.
- Peter cut off a soldier's ear and Jesus simply picked it up and put it back on his head
- He died on Calvary's cross, was buried for 3 days, and then He rose from the dead. He is alive today, as He sits at the right hand of God the Father and He has promised to Return to this earth again.

Jesus forgave sins

So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, “Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ***Mark 2:4-7 NKJV***

The Christ, Son of Man

But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Jesus said, “I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think? And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. ***Mark 14:61-63 NKJV***

Lunatic, Liar, or Lord

C.S. Lewis popularized the "lunatic, liar, or lord" argument, suggesting that Jesus's claims about his divinity leave only three possible conclusions. In his book *Mere Christianity*, Lewis wrote that it is logically impossible to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher while rejecting his divine claims. He argued that based on Jesus's words and actions as recorded in the Gospels, a person must choose one of three options.

- **A lunatic:** A man who was "merely a man" but claimed to be God would be a lunatic "on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg." A person who is sane does not go around saying they are God.
- **A liar:** If Jesus was not God and knew his claims were false, he would be a malicious liar or "the Devil of Hell." Lewis argues that a great moral teacher could not possibly lie about the most important aspect of his identity.
- **The Lord:** The only remaining option, Lewis concludes, is to accept that Jesus was who he claimed to be: the Son of God and Lord.

Jesus was our substitute

- Jesus did not come as our example, He came as our substitute.
- There has never been another like Jesus who walked this earth.
- He lived 33 ½ years in sinless perfection. He fulfilled the law of God.
- Jesus came back to life after being dead for 3 days. God the Father raised Him from the dead.
- Jesus came to this earth to rescue us. Jesus came to save us.
- There was no other way in which we could have been saved, other than God Himself coming to the earth, to become a human, and live a sinless life, and then go to the cross to die in our place. He had to pay the price for us, on our behalf.

Our substitute

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. ***II Corinthians 5:21NIV***

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, ***Galatians 3:13 NKJV***

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, ***I Peter 3:18 NKJV***

The power is in the name of Jesus

- Demons run at the mention of the name of Jesus.
- When you pray for the sick, you need to do it in the name of Jesus.
- Miracles are done in the name of Jesus.
- The name of Jesus has the power, and the authority.
- Why, because Jesus is God. He is your creator, He is your redeemer.
- There is no power in the name of Buddha, or Allah, or any other name that you want to call as your god. All the power is in the name of Jesus.
- This is why we baptize in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, **1 Timothy 2:5 NKJV***

Emmanuel

- There are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.
- Our entire Bible is pointing us to one great over-reaching truth.
- That we were born sinners, separated from God. We were all in trouble, condemned to die, and on our way to hell. But God wouldn't leave us in this condition, instead He came to the earth to save us, to rescue us.
- He was born of a virgin. He was given the name of Jesus, the LORD our savior. He is God in flesh, or God with us, Emmanuel. The LORD our savior. Jesus lived a perfect sinless life for 33 ½ years.
- Then He went to the cross to die in our place, as our substitute.

Jesus is your judge

One last thought about who is in the center of your heart. Do you have Jesus, your creator and redeemer there, or do you have an idol there, your higher power, the god of your own understanding, a golden calf?

When it is all said and done, you will stand before Christ and give an account of your life. You will not get a choice in this matter. Your idol will not be able to save you then.

So, make sure Jesus is in the center of your heart and not some dumb idol.

Our goal is to please him. For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. ***II Corinthians 5:9-10 NLT***

You will give an account

For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. ***Romans 14:10-12 NKJV***

But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. ***Matthew 12:36-37 NKJV***

The Great White Throne Judgement

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15 NKJV

The book of life

*And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. **Revelation 20:15 NKJV***

Is your name written in the book of life?