

Loss of Meaning and the Problem of Idolatry – part 2

The Origin of Idolatry in the OT

March 5, 2023

DAY 1: Man in the image of God and the Cultural Mandate

Gen. 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

1. Man has meaning because:

- a. God created man. God thought enough of you to create you.
- b. We are made in God’s image. We have capacities for moral judgments, volitional choices can be made against our “instincts” or “desires.” There is a personal love that is unique in all of creation. It is deeper, personal, with the opportunity to give, not just receive.
- c. Because we are personal beings, we have significance, and are a significantly different being than the animals.

2. The Cultural Mandate

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Genesis 1:29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.”³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

- a. The earth is given to mankind as a love gift. It is meant to draw man to God who would give such an amazing and thorough gift.
- b. The earth is given to mankind to glorify God and to be a blessing to everyone.
- c. To be fruitful and increase in number means more than just having children. It is to create a loving and righteous social framework in which people can live and thrive.
- d. To rule over creation is to create a righteous, moral, and just framework to life.

3. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: The assault on Adam and Eve

*Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “**Did God really say**, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”*

1. Satan is lying to Eve, deceiving Eve, and casting aspersions on God in the hopes of creating doubts towards God’s goodness and the goodness of God’s commands.

Genesis 3:2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

2. Satan’s approach is eroding away Eve’s confidence in God’s goodness. Her response to Satan is chipping away of what God promised and said to Adam and Eve. Satan’s approach is the same with everyone of us. He is constantly seeking to undermine our belief in the goodness of God. Does this resonate with you?

3. Satan now goes for the jugular. Satan offers Eve the road to “independence” and pride which is really the road to misery and death.

*Genesis 3:4 “**You will not certainly die**,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

a. How does Satan call God a liar in v. 5a?

b. How does Satan insinuate that God is holding back goodness from Adam and Eve in v. 5b?

Genesis 3:6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

4. Eve’s basis for making righteous decisions has changed. What is her new basis for decisions?

5. The problem of human evil is born right here and is passed on to every human being through every generation, in every place and culture in the world.

6. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: The consequences of idolatry in everyday life

1. We see the beginning of the sudden and immediate consequences upon Adam, Eve, and on their marriage. The problem of human evil is now set in stone.

Genesis 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

2. Instead of admitting their sin against God, they now do what comes “naturally” to them. Rather than humble themselves before God and receive His mercy and goodness, they proudly take matter into their own hands.

3. The covering of themselves with fig leaves is a knee jerk reaction to the embarrassment of being seen in their rebellion, and the urge to cover their shame. The effort to hide the exposure and shame of moral guilt is “the best they could do” to hide the shame of their physical exposure.

*Genesis 3:8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
9 But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”*

4. What do you sense in God’s attitude and question?

Genesis 3:10 He (Adam) answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

Genesis 3:11 And he (God) said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

5. God gives Adam every opportunity to come clean. Adam refuses, and now the blame-game begins. Adam blames both God and Eve.

*Genesis 3:12 The man said, “**The woman you put here** with me—**she gave me some fruit** from the tree, and I ate it.”*

6. And now Eve follows suit. She blames Satan.

*Genesis 3:13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “**The serpent deceived me, and I ate.**”*

7. What do we see from Adam and Eve after their first sin? Lying, deceiving, hiding, obfuscating, blame-shifting, rationalizing, and justifying.

8. Can you relate to Adam and Eve’s new “normal”? When we try to take control over our lives instead of submitting to God, these are things we get!

9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: Adam and Eve's idolatry, the substituting of God

1. Adam and Eve become something very different as a result of their sin nature. The image of God is now distorted in them. Instead of reflecting the goodness of God, they are now bent on finding themselves, fulfilling themselves, and justifying themselves.
2. Regarding Adam, what happened? Adam shifted ultimate commitments, from God and reflecting his image, to being committed to **something else** and **someone else**. Instead of revering God, he revered something else in place of God. Instead of revering God man reveres someone else.
3. What was the **something else**? At least three somethings. First, immediate forbidden pleasure. Second, proudly and foolishly asserting himself over God. The “rush” of power. “Nobody’s going to tell me what to do.” Third, the rush of feeling “free” and “independent” of unwanted authority.
4. What was the **someone else**? At least two “someones”. Someone #1 was Satan in the moment, and on an on-going basis as long as Satan’s lies matched up with Adam’s desires. Someone #2 was himself, instead of God.
5. What was the result? Adam began to resemble his new de facto object of worship, Satan. It’s not that Adam became a “Satan worshipper” as we think of it. But Satan’s desires and interests became Adam’s. The consequences were immediate. First, Adam began to be deceitful like Satan. Second, Adam justified his disobedience. And third, Adam blamed Eve for the whole mess.
6. Adam allowed the serpent to rule over him instead of ruling over the serpent and casting the serpent out of the garden. Instead of wanting to be near God who had given them everything for their enjoyment, both Adam and Eve now hid from God. Both Adam and Eve chose the prerogative of self-rule, not God-rule.
7. The **overall shift** can be summed up like this. “I know what I want. I deserve it. I will get what I want even if I have to hurt someone else”—in this case, both God and Eve.
8. The **overall effect**? Adam and Eve began scrambling to find meaning without God as the central driver, the central reason, the central perspective, and the central power of their lives. Their hearts were scrambling, like sailboats whose rudders had been cut off and were powerless against the winds and tides.

THE LOSS OF MEANING TOUCHES EVERY AREA OF THEIR LIVES.

9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: The dynamics of idolatry and the loss of meaning

1. What exactly happens inside the human heart with idolatry? There is a series of heart shifts, or more exactly, heart exchanges.

- **A shift of allegiance**

2. Adam's allegiance shifted from God in two ways: (1) to himself and, (2) to Satan, in the moment. Adam quickly began to take on the characteristics of Satan: liar, deceiver, blame-shifter. The same results happened to Eve. She misquoted God's word, minimized it, and twisted it to fit her immediate desires.

THE LOSS OF MEANING: We were designed to please God, to find our joy there. That's gone.

- **A shift of trust.**

3. Eve's shift of trust is noteworthy. (1) Eve minimized their privileges from "you may eat freely" down to "we may eat." (2) Eve minimized God's judgment from "you shall surely die" to "lest you die." (3) She maximized the prohibition to "you may not touch it," making God's command seem frivolous and petty. (4) Eve also began to take on the characteristics of Satan quickly, as liar, deceiver, blame-shifter, etc.

THE LOSS OF MEANING: Ultimately there is no one to completely trust, anymore. Do you trust yourself completely? If you've lived long enough, and are aware of yourself, the answer is "of course not."

We were meant to enjoy the peace of trusting God. That's gone.

- **A shift toward self-worship.**

4. Adam decided he knew better than God, and he wanted to advance himself at all costs. He trusted himself, a creature, instead of the Creator.

→THE LOSS OF MEANING: Adam's desires ruled him instead of Adam ruling his desires.

- **A shift of authority.**

5. Adam exalted his own code of behavior over God's code of behavior. Adam was creating a new and different standard of behavior instead of God's. Adam had abrogated to himself the authority to make or re-make moral and ethical law instead of God's tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

→THE LOSS OF MEANING: Nothing matters more than feelings and desires. It is impossible to find meaning on that road.

- **A shift of focus and centrality**

6. Instead of God being the point of life, Adam made himself the point of his life. So did Eve.

Gen. 3:22 And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." ²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

THE LOSS OF MEANING: We have broken the Creator-creature dynamic of authority.

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?