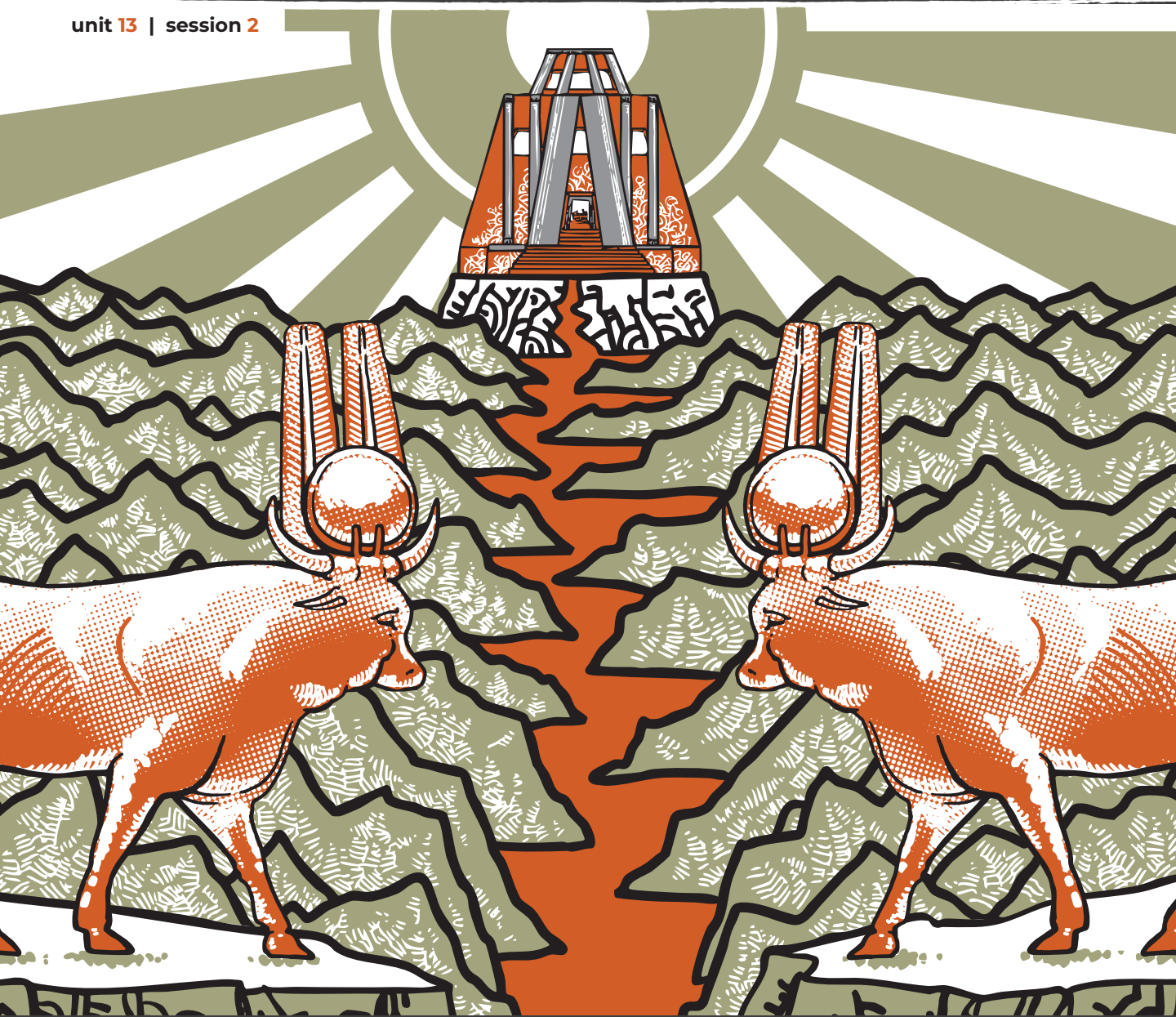


EVIL IN THE *LORD'S SIGHT*

unit 13 | session 2



CHRIST CONNECTION

The kings of Israel led the people astray. Under their leadership, Israel fell into idol worship and did what was evil in God's eyes. Christ is the King of kings, and He perfectly leads us to worship the Father.

BECOMING CANAANITE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

1 Kings 12–15

OUR IDOLATRY LEADS OTHERS ASTRAY

1 KINGS 12:25-33

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel. 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. 27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.” 28 So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” 29 And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one. 31 He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites. 32 And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. 33 He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings.

IDOLATRY ROBS US OF OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

1 KINGS 14:21-26

21 Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. 22 And Judah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. 23 For they also built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, 24 and there were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. 25 In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. 26 He took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house. He took away everything. He also took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made.

MAIN POINT.

Idolatry leads us to imitate the world around us instead of Christ.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SIN'S EFFECTS IN THE WORLD

Sin does not only impact our relationship with God; it is also the root of our broken relationships with the people around us. Human sinfulness is the reason the creation groans in anticipation for redemption and deliverance from its bondage to evil powers (Rom. 8:20-22). Sin has infected and redirected the social structures of society, leading to injustice and oppression. The distorting effects of sin are visible all around us, but the good news of the gospel is that the battle against these powers will be won through the work of Christ.

DISCUSSION

OUR IDOLATRY LEADS OTHERS ASTRAY

1 KINGS 12:25-33

- Read verses 26-27. What was Jeroboam's motive for setting up the golden calves?
- ♥ • What is idolatry? How can being self-focused lead us to idolatry?
- Why do you think an entire nation followed Jeroboam's command to worship golden calves? What are the "golden calves" in our culture—things that steal our worship?

IDOLATRY ROBS US OF OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

1 KINGS 14:21-26

- ✝ • Why is it important to think carefully about who you're following?
- 📖 • What did imitating pagan nations cost God's people? What does it cost us to follow the world?
- 🧠 • How does God feel about the nation's actions (v. 22)? What does this help you see about Him?



WHO ARE YOU IMITATING: CHRIST OR THE WORLD?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Do you ever think about who you're becoming? Maybe you do, and you're proud of what you see. Maybe you're growing spiritually and making godly choices. Maybe you've walked away from sin that used to hold you hostage. You look back and see how much knowing Jesus has transformed your daily life. On the other hand, maybe you're ashamed of who you're becoming. Maybe right now, you can't believe the choices you're making. You can't believe how far you've fallen. You've chosen to imitate the world, and in doing so, you've become just like the world. And you may not know how to get back. But the truth is that God hasn't left you. You can repent and return to Him. You're not too far gone because if you're His child—if you've placed your faith in Christ for salvation—then you're still His child. You're still becoming who God has designed you to be. And because of God's loving kindness and mercy, you can choose to become like His Son.



DAY ONE

EXODUS 20:1-6

Have you ever thought about why certain rules exist? What happened for someone to decide that a rule needed to be put in place? Well, rules usually stem from previous actions. For instance, maybe your parents left you at home for a night while they went out of town. Their first rule was probably that you weren't allowed to have anyone over. They likely made the rule because you had done this previously, they had done it before when they were young, or someone they knew did it—and it only led to trouble. The point is that most rules usually reflect harmful, unwise decisions we would likely make or ones we've made in the past.

Because God created us, He knows us—so well, in fact, that He knows what we're capable of doing. The Lord knows what is in our heart because He knows us intimately. When God delivered the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, He knew what His people were capable of and what was in their hearts too. When we look at the first and second commandments, we can see God's awareness of our propensity to wander away from Him. It points to how easily we put things before God and how quickly we bow to worldly idols. And from this heart issue all other issues flow. The commands to have no other gods besides the one true God and to have no idols in our lives are crucial to following any other command God gave us. Following the Lord begins with the commitment to honor these two commandments. How good and gracious is God that He knows us so deeply and gives us the guidance we need to enjoy relationship with Him? His commands are for our good, and they come from God's love for us—from how intimately He knows us.

- **HOW DO YOU VIEW GOD'S COMMANDS—AS RULES OR AS AN EXPRESSION OF HIS LOVE AND CARE? EXPLAIN.**
- **IN WHAT WAYS DO ALL OTHER COMMANDS FLOW FROM THESE FIRST TWO?**

PRAY

LORD, I'VE BEEN CONDITIONED TO VIEW RULES AS BURDENSOME, BUT YOUR COMMANDS AREN'T A BURDEN. I TRUST THAT YOUR COMMANDS ARE FOR MY GOOD, AND THEY COME FROM YOUR GREAT LOVE FOR ME.



DAY TWO

EXODUS 32:1-6

Have you ever had the feeling that a situation you were experiencing was one you had already experienced before, in the exact same way? People call it *déjà vu*. If you've had this happen to you, then you know it can feel really strange! This week, we studied about Jeroboam making two golden calves for the people to bow before in worship. Jeroboam's motives were rooted in a self-centered desire to maintain the people's loyalty. This story probably felt very familiar to a lot of us—maybe a little like *déjà vu*—because this wasn't the first time God's people did this.

In today's passage, we read about a similar situation. While Moses was on Mount Sinai meeting with the Lord and receiving the Ten Commandments, God's people were committing idolatry. They had been surrounded by pagan worship in Egypt for so long that it had become part of their identity as well. They hadn't yet grasped the idea that they were supposed to follow only Yahweh, the one true God. They hadn't yet understood that anything earthly or manmade could never represent God accurately, and that bowing before anything else was idolatry. Why? Because attempting to represent God with anything on earth only cheapens His worth. Sure, we struggle with putting activities, people, and material possessions before God. But sometimes, we even bow to things which, in a way, represent God—things like church activity and good works. Many of us who are walking faithfully with the Lord are no longer attracted to worldly idols. But we can make idols out of good things too—out of things which represent God but are not God.

- **WHAT DOES THE SITUATION IN TODAY'S PASSAGE SHOW YOU ABOUT THE CYCLE OF IDOLATRY?**
- **DO YOU HAVE AN IDOL IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU KEEP RETURNING TO?**

PRAY

GOD, I NEVER WANT TO CHEAPEN YOUR GREATNESS AND YOUR WORTH. HELP ME TO STOP THE CYCLE OF IDOLATRY IN MY OWN LIFE, AND HELP ME TO RECOGNIZE EVEN THE GOOD THINGS THAT ARE STEALING MY AFFECTION AND MY DEVOTION.



DAY THREE

PSALM 115:4-8

Have you ever known someone who was really afraid of dolls? Maybe seeing one even sent them into a panicked state. Did you know an actual name exists for a condition in which a person is afraid of dolls? It's called pediophobia! And it's very real. Pediophobia is an irrational fear of dolls even though they don't pose a real threat. People who suffer with pediophobia are often most bothered by the fact that dolls look real but aren't—they look alive but aren't.

Today's passage presents a similar idea concerning idols, specifically the golden calf the Israelites worshiped in Exodus 32. It was life-like. It had eyes and ears and a mouth, yet it was lifeless. It didn't have the abilities to see, hear, and speak. It was powerless to help those bowing before it. But what's really important is the way the psalmist described those who bow before idols: "Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them" (v. 8). In other words, when we trust in idols—things like money, popularity, beauty, sports—we become spiritually lifeless too. We become like the thing we worship. We may look spiritually alive on the outside by doing all the right things, like attending church, praying out loud, or singing worship songs. We present ourselves as if we're spiritually thriving, when on the inside, we're far from God. What idols are you trusting in? Take a good look at them. Consider how you're becoming like them. These worldly idols promise freedom, fun, and happiness. But they're powerless to keep these promises. They're powerless to do anything at all.

- **EXAMINE THE IDOLS IN YOUR OWN LIFE: CAN THEY REALLY OFFER YOU ANYTHING THAT LASTS?**
- **WHY ARE WE SO EASILY SWAYED INTO BELIEVING WORLDLY IDOLS ARE GOOD FOR US?**

PRAY

LORD, I'M DONE WITH THE LIE THAT IDOLS OF THIS WORLD CAN DO ANYTHING FOR ME. I KNOW THEY'RE POWERLESS TO SAVE ME. THEY CAN'T GIVE ME A FULFILLING LIFE. I REFUSE TO BOW BEFORE THEM.



DAY FOUR

ROMANS 1:18-25

Think of a time when you mentally knew what was wise but chose to do the opposite. For example, maybe you did a crazy trick on your skateboard or bike even though you knew you'd likely get hurt because you wanted to impress your friends. Or maybe you drove faster than the speed limit, though you knew it was against the law and dangerous to do so. Maybe you went to a party even though you knew the situation there was going to be sinful. We can know the right course and still choose the wrong one.

In today's passage, Paul explained that we often exchange the truth for a lie. Though we know God and can even see His power through creation, we make choices that go against His commands. We accept lies taught by culture, and our hearts darken to truth. We know God is the only One worthy of worship, but we turn to lesser things and devote our time and attention to them. We worship created things rather than our Creator. We know better, but we choose to allow other things and other people to take God's place in our lives. We knowingly embrace a lie because in the moment, these created things are appealing to our flesh. They appeal to our sinful desires and give us instant satisfaction. Here's what you can do when you're tempted to put created things in God's place: Look around you. Look at God's majesty in creation. Look at the way He designed everything you see. Then, live to glorify Him rather than anything else. Let everything else be secondary to Him because He is the only One worthy of worship. Choose to act on what you know is godly truth rather than acting on what you feel in the moment.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU CHOSEN WHAT FELT GOOD IN THE MOMENT RATHER THAN FOLLOWING WHAT YOU KNOW IS TRUE?**
- **WHAT "CREATED THINGS" ARE STEALING YOUR DEVOTION AND ATTENTION FROM GOD?**

PRAY

GOD, I CONFESS THAT I'VE CHOSEN TO IGNORE YOUR TRUTH AT TIMES. I'VE ALLOWED CREATED THINGS TO STEAL MY DEVOTION, AND I'VE ALLOWED THEM TO TAKE YOUR PLACE. FORGIVE ME AND HELP ME TO FIX MY EYES ON YOU.



DAY FIVE

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18

How does it feel to be separated from the crowd? Do you feel anxious if you're singled out in front of other people? For many of us, the thought of being separated from everyone else is terrifying. We'd rather blend in and go unnoticed instead of feeling vulnerable and exposed. We don't want to stand out, especially for going against the flow of what everyone else is doing. We say we want to be an individual, but really, we just want to be like everyone else. We want to fit in with the crowd.

Can we just get real for a minute? We enjoy learning about God's love and forgiveness. We want to think about His mercy and His compassion. But we don't want to talk about how God calls us to be separate from the world—to holiness. By its very definition, holiness means to be set apart. In this passage, Paul warned the Christians in Corinth about being "yoked" with nonbelievers. A yoke is a wooden beam attached to harnesses that are placed around two animals' necks (like oxen), connecting them for plowing or pulling heavy loads. The yoke forces the animals to remain close to one another and to move in the same direction. To be yoked together with someone means you're working toward a common goal; it implies that you're traveling in the same direction, that you want the same things. And though we are called to love others, God specifically commands us to "go out from their midst" in the way we live—in our words, our actions, our motives. We aren't called to look like the world. We're called to move in another direction, toward righteousness. And when we do this, we shine like lights in the darkness. Paul isn't saying we should remove ourselves from the world or not interact with nonbelievers. He is urging us to actively imitate Jesus.

- **WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE ARE "YOKED" WITH THIS WORLD? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?**
- **WHY ARE WE SO AFRAID OF BEING SEPARATE FROM THE WORLD—OF SEEKING HOLINESS?**

PRAY

GOD, I KNOW YOU'VE CALLED ME TO HOLINESS. I CONFESS THAT THIS MAKES ME UNCOMFORTABLE. HELP ME TO DESIRE TO IMITATE JESUS MORE THAN DESIRING TO IMITATE THE WORLD. HELP ME PUT ASIDE MY OWN COMFORT.