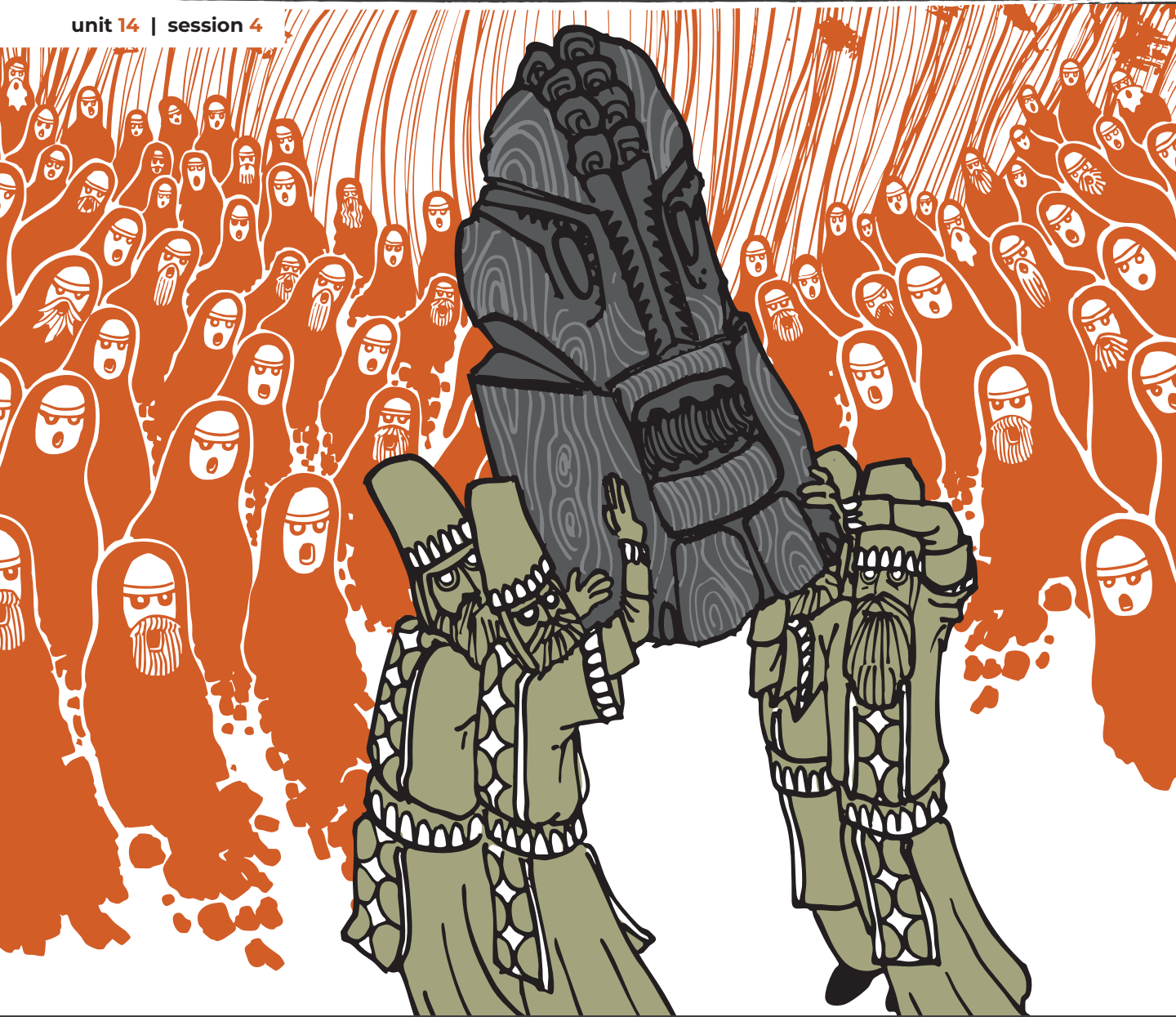


WORTHLESS *IDOLS*

unit 14 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

Because Jesus has revealed Himself to us as our greatest treasure and source of true joy, we seek to identify and put away the various idols in our lives to show others the goodness of God.

IGNORING THE SIGNS

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.

2 Kings 17

IGNORING GOD'S VOICE LEADS TO SIN

2 KINGS 17:6-17

6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. 7 And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods 8 and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. 9 And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. 10 They set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, 11 and there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them. And they did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger, 12 and they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this." 13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets." 14 But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. 15 They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them. 16 And they abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. 17 And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

IGNORING GOD'S VOICE LEADS TO CONSEQUENCES

2 KINGS 17:18-20

18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only. 19 Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. 20 And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight.

MAIN POINT.

Hearing and responding to God's voice spares us from painful consequences.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS JUST

God establishes standards for us that are in accordance with His righteousness, and we will be judged according to those righteous standards (Lev. 11:44-45; Rom. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 5:10). It would be an injustice if God were not to uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character. Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both the Judge and the Justifier of those who place their faith in Christ (Rom. 3:25-26).

DISCUSSION

IGNORING GOD'S VOICE LEADS TO SIN

2 KINGS 17:6-17

- How does knowing Israel's disobedience continued for hundreds of years affect the way you see their consequences?
- What surprises you the most about Israel's actions (vv. 7-17)? How could they fall so far?
- Why do we ignore God's voice? What happens the longer we do?

IGNORING GOD'S VOICE LEADS TO CONSEQUENCES

2 KINGS 17:18-20

- Why do we view consequences as unfair or cruel?
- What does it mean to be just? How is God just?
- What was Israel's punishment? Can it happen to us?



ONE OF ISRAEL'S GREATEST SINS WAS DESIRING TO BE LIKE THE NATIONS AROUND THEM. WHY DO WE FALL INTO THIS TRAP? HOW CAN WE CHOOSE DIFFERENTLY?

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Why do we often roll our eyes when others try to warn us? Maybe a family member, teacher, or mentor cautions us to go another way—to make a different choice—because they see us headed toward a harmful path. We hear them out; we nod and acknowledge their words. But we often think the consequences won't happen to us; we believe we are the exception. Those warnings are for other people. When it comes to sin, we often react the same way to the warnings in God's Word and from His Spirit living within us. We read them; we hear them. We nod and acknowledge the truth in them, but we think we're stronger than we really are. We tell ourselves that we can handle the pressure and the temptation better than other people who failed before us. The truth is that God's warnings and instructions are for every one of us. We're weaker than we think, and to stay strong, we must cling to Christ. God's warnings flow from His great love and care. Ignoring them will only harm us.



DAY ONE

JOHN 10:1-10

Did you know that most parents can pick out their child's voice in a crowd of other children? The same goes for children too. In a crowded room, they recognize their own parent's voice. Voices make strong impressions on us. They're each unique, and we pick up on small details, like accent, inflection, and pronunciation. Though we might be able to mimic someone else's voice almost perfectly, there would still be differences.

Jesus called Himself a Shepherd. Sheep were accustomed to their specific shepherd's voice. In fact, shepherds spent so much time with their sheep that they often named them. They spent almost every waking minute with them, teaching the sheep to recognize their voice. Why? Because the shepherd's voice kept them safe. The shepherd's voice led them out of danger and to food and water. Once sheep learned their shepherd's voice, they wouldn't follow another. Like Jesus pointed out, sheep would even run from other voices. They trusted only the true shepherd's voice because other voices might endanger them. Like sheep, we are led astray so easily. Why? We often haven't learned God's voice. We haven't spent enough time with the Lord to detect His voice apart from other voices. We live in a loud culture, and the noise drowns out God's voice. Simply put: We listen to many other voices instead of listening to the Lord's voice. Listening to Him requires us to be still, to sit with His Word, to pray, to listen for the Holy Spirit. But instead of doing these things, we make decisions and just hope they'll turn out okay. We act first, then we pray for God's blessing. What if we were more like sheep? What if we spent time with our Shepherd? What if we learned His voice and could detect it from strangers' voices? What if we ran from voices trying to lead us away, even when it's our own?

- **HOW ARE YOU INVESTING IN LEARNING GOD'S VOICE?**
- **WHAT OTHER VOICES KEEP YOU FROM HEARING AND OBEYING GOD'S VOICE?**

PRAY

GOD, I WANT TO KNOW YOUR VOICE. I WANT TO HEAR YOU SPEAK. HELP ME POSITION MYSELF TO HEAR YOU IN THIS LOUD WORLD. HELP ME RESPOND TO YOUR VOICE AND TO RUN FROM ALL OTHERS.





DAY TWO

PSALM 78:1-8

Can you think of a lesson you've learned from someone else's experience? Maybe you watched someone do something that led to them getting hurt, so you learned not to attempt it. Or maybe it was even something silly, like not walking through a wet area in the school cafeteria because you watched someone else slip and fall. We can often watch other people and learn from their mistakes. In fact, your parents, grandparents, or other family members probably hope you'll learn from some of their mistakes instead of repeating them.

Psalms 78 is a basic overview of the highs and lows in Israel's history. Asaph, whom David appointed as a worship leader in the tabernacle choir, reflected on stories that were passed down from his ancestors. He recalled God's command to know the law and to pass it down to future generations so that they could follow it as well—so they could know God's faithfulness and put their confidence in Him. Isn't this command for us too? We don't often think about what kind of legacy we're leaving now—not just our legacy but God's. Do you ever wonder how people after us will view God because of the way we lived? What will an account of our history show mattered most to us? What we say and do now impacts what future generations will know and believe about the Lord. As believers, we have a tremendous responsibility to know God's Word and to pass it on. We have the honor of holding His Word in our hands and committing it to our hearts and minds. When we don't, we risk forgetting (v. 7). We risk leaving a legacy that says God's commands don't matter in our culture—that they aren't applicable for us. We have so much to learn from the history recorded for us in the pages of our Bibles. We can't neglect it. The people coming after us need to know God's story, and we get to tell them.

- **WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO THAT YOUR LIFE REFLECTS THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING AND LIVING OUT GOD'S COMMANDS?**
- **HOW ARE YOU LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SHARE GOD'S STORY WITH OTHERS? IF YOU'RE NOT DOING SO, WHY?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR THE HONOR OF GETTING TO BE A PART OF YOUR STORY. THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF YOUR WORD. HELP ME TO LIVE IN A WAY THAT REFLECTS ITS IMPORTANCE. I WANT MY LIFE TO SHOW YOUR COMMANDS ARE GOOD.



DAY THREE

PSALM 78:10-64

What are some important lessons history has taught us? Certainly, our world has learned that humans are resilient; we fight to bounce back after disaster and war. We've learned that hatred and racism reveal the ugly side of humanity; they cause destruction and devastation. We've learned that small acts of goodness and kindness can make lasting impacts. We've learned that history often repeats itself because we forget to remember these lessons and more.

The passage today is longer, but dig in. Psalm 78 is more evidence that we are prone to forgetting. A common thread weaves throughout Israel's history, the pattern of forgetting God's works, His law, His kindness, His compassion, His wrath. Though God freed them from slavery and performed mighty wonders on their behalf, the Israelites forgot and complained against Him in the wilderness. Though He fed them with manna, they longed to return to Egypt. Though God made a covenant, a promise, to be Israel's God and to care for them, the people forgot their covenant with the Lord, turned to false gods, and bowed to idols. But woven throughout this passage are words like "but" and "yet." These words signal this idea: Even though the people forgot, God remembered His promise. Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, God showed compassion, atoned for their sin, and preserved them (v. 38). These threads weave throughout our stories too. We're prone to forgetting, to being unfaithful, and to wandering. But. Yet. God remembers. God sees His Son's blood covering us, atoning for our sin. He shows us compassion. Through the Holy Spirit, God calls us back to His heart and shows us forgiveness. He beckons us to remember—not to forget His commands and His faithfulness. May the stories that we remember help us long to be faithful to Him in return.

- **WHERE ARE THREADS OF FORGETFULNESS IN YOUR LIFE? HOW CAN YOU COMMIT TO REMEMBER INSTEAD?**
- **WHAT DOES THIS PSALM SHOW ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER? LIST OUT WORDS TO DESCRIBE HIM.**

PRAY

**GOD, I COMMIT TO REMEMBER. I WON'T FORGET
YOUR WORKS AND YOUR FAITHFULNESS. THANK YOU
FOR SHOWING ME COMPASSION WHEN I WANDER
AND FOR DRAWING ME BACK TO YOU.**



DAY FOUR

ROMANS 2:5-11

How do you know a storm is coming? Nature gives us signs, right? The sky grows dark, the wind begins to blow, thunder booms, lightening lights up the sky. Then the rain comes. If we're paying attention, we notice the signs and get to safety. If we ignore the signs, then we may get in a dangerous, or at least annoying, situation.

In the lesson this week, we read about Assyria invading the Northern Kingdom and deporting God's people. They were exiled, most of them enslaved. But this didn't happen suddenly. For hundreds of years, God warned His people. God was clear from the start that if the people followed Him and kept His commands, He would bless them out of all the nations. He was clear that they were to worship only Him and not follow the gods in the land He was giving them. God warned them that these false gods would be a snare to them—a trap. Through the prophets, God warned Israel that consequences were coming. He urged them to turn back and repent. Prophet after prophet spoke the same message: God is compassionate, but He is just; disaster is coming. But Israel ignored God's voice; they ignored the warning signs. The storm came, and it carried them away. As believers, we are safe from final judgment; our salvation is secure in Christ. But we interact with people every day who either can't see the warnings or ignore them. We have a message of hope that we must share with the world. A different kind of disaster is coming, when Jesus will return to judge every person, and He will say to those who never trusted in Him, "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23). So, point others to Him. Engage people in conversation. Love people the way God loves them so they'll ask why you're different. Then, tell them.

- **HAVE YOU CALLED ON CHRIST FOR SALVATION? DO YOU HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM?**
- **WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH OTHER PEOPLE? HOW CAN YOU TAKE ONE BOLD STEP TO DO SO?**

PRAY

GOD, THANK YOU FOR SAVING ME FROM SIN AND DEATH. HELP ME LOVINGLY POINT PEOPLE TO YOU. HELP ME TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH BOLDNESS. HELP ME TO LOVE LIKE YOU LOVE.



DAY FIVE

2 KINGS 17:24-41

Have you ever heard the phrase, “You can’t have your cake and eat it too”? In other words, you can’t simultaneously save the cake and eat it. Once you eat it, it’s gone. It’s sort of a strange way of saying that we can’t have both options when given a choice. For example, if you have a dollar, you can’t both save it and spend it. You either save it, or you spend it. Make sense?

After the king of Assyria deported the Israelites, he planted deportees from other nations to live in Israel. This was a common practice during this time period. So, Israel was then home to people from all cultural and religious backgrounds. They brought their beliefs with them—their idols and their “gods.” In His fury, God sent lions to attack them! So, they appealed to the king of Assyria to send back a priest of Israel to help them understand “the god of the land.” But the people continued to worship their false gods—the gods of their home region. They wanted their gods and the only God. Hear this truth: This is never a possibility. It wasn’t for them. It isn’t for us. Following God means we follow only God. Worshiping God means we worship only God. Now, it’s safe to say that in our current culture, we aren’t tempted to bow before gods of storms, fertility, agriculture, and so on, like ancient cultures did. But our culture certainly worships its own “gods”—fame, money, power, social media, physical beauty, material possessions, physical pleasure, harmful substances. Do we need to keep going? Our “gods” reflect what’s important to our culture. Today, God’s voice echoes the same warning: “You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, but you shall fear the LORD” (vv. 35-36). We can’t have both. Why would we even want both?

- **IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE ARE YOU POTENTIALLY TRYING TO SERVE BOTH AN IDOL AND GOD?**
- **WHY DO YOU THINK GOD REPEATEDLY SAID, “YOU SHALL NOT FEAR OTHER GODS”? WHAT DO YOU FEAR WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DON’T BOW TO THESE CULTURAL “GODS”?**

PRAY

GOD, I FALL INTO THE TRAP OF BELIEVING I CAN WORSHIP THE “GODS” OF THIS WORLD AND WORSHIP YOU. I KNOW I HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR WHEN I WORSHIP YOU ALONE. TURN MY HEART AWAY FROM IDOLS AND WORLDLY AFFECTIONS.