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Well, is the sun shining yet? Sure starting to feel like it. The grass is growing so hard and fast I can barely push the mower through it. God's blessing can be felt on the earth and in our lives. If ever there was a time to feel blessed and grateful it's right now!

As we continue to draw closer to God more Bible principles come into play. As great as the blessings are, the real treasure is in the Blessed, the Giver, the One who loves us with an everlasting love and was even willing to taste death for our sake.

Drawing near to God we become more conscious of our own inadequacy, our own limitations and shortcomings, and our unbelievable tendency to do, think, feel and speak the wrong thing in any situation. It's so bad, that when we realize how bad it is, we need a fresh grip on our foundation, *The just shall live by faith.*

Another Bible exhortation during revival is to put away the false gods that have crept into our lives. Do we have false gods? Of course we do. We may smile knowingly at the mistakes Israel made in the wilderness, but the truth is that we do the same things in our day and age. So, what are the contemporary versions of

false gods?

The things we rely on, spend time on, and allow to occupy our minds can be forms of idolatry. We may chuckle at the sight of someone in another culture burning incense to a little statue of a rat, a snake, a fish, or a fat little man but if we spotlight some of our own habits, the joke is over.

Life is a tension between natural and spiritual forces. Some of the things ordained by God are that we must spend our days working, that we must eat to stay alive, our bodies need to be clothed, and breathing is the last activity to go untaxed. So there are things we must have and do if we are to function in the world God made. The conflict arises from: How much is enough?

I Corinthians 12 begins discussing the gifts of the Holy Spirit by comparing the operation of

God's Holy Spirit to idolatry. The phrase *as you were led* tells us that there's actually a spirit *energizing* the idol that captures its victim. Likewise we can expect spiritual forces to try to pull us off the track. We're tempted to serve not God but self and the things of this world.

Materialism is only the most obvious of deities. It has many shades and variations that are subtle and easy to justify- as long as one doesn't get too close to God, who dwells in all revealing light. Comfort, convenience, and consumerism can be subtle idolatry.

One of the most dangerous idols we'll ever encounter can be lumped under a sinister heading:

false comfort!

When this happens the devil comes to us not as the sworn enemy of God and mankind but as such a caring person, bearing just what we think we need. Oh, this helps so much, it must be straight from God! But the Holy Spirit is our comforter. We just found something better than God! Or did we?

Our Lord Jesus promised us Life! - Abundantly! It is not life to rely on the things of this world too heavily, to let them fill our minds and channel our desires into selfish pursuits. The presence of God is fullness of joy. If the only joy we know is the pursuit of things that don't make us happy, something's wrong. That's bondage!

One sign of idolatry is addiction and dependency. This can be many things. Shopping can be a craving, something we're driven to when we are out of sorts and unhappy. Eating can be another. Television is designed to be captivating. Aside from the issues of sex and violence—God doesn't want His people bowing down in front of a box for 20 plus hours a week! Period!

A counselor's definition of alcoholism is *god in a bottle*. Whenever you need help, just open the bottle. This can also apply to all forms of medication, legal or otherwise, over the counter or prescription. Where's the line between legitimate pain relief and abuse? That can be a good, hard question. Don't forget, there's a spirit of temptation too.

The hurts and memories of our life can be an altar of personal devotion. Years ago when I was going through a dark season I sensed the Lord speaking to me, *You're worshipping that problem.* Worshipping? That ugly thing? But then I realized that I was allowing it to fill my heart, captivate my mind and consume my time. That was worship!

Relationships can be an idol. Relationships we have, had, wish we had or just dream about. Many people feel they are lonely because they're single. The truth may be that they're single because they are lonely. Anyone who gets close enough to sense the big hungry hole inside beats a hasty, and wise retreat. A person is really not a marriage prospect until they are complete as a single.

Consequences-

Every action has consequences. We either build our life or tear it down each day. If our comfort is food, a mirror may have something to tell us. If it is shopping, both our budget and the clutter in our closet may have a story for us. (It's been years since I could fit my car into my spacious garage...)

Some years back a doctor who'd smoked heavily just up and quit. Friends asked him if it had been hard giving up the habit. *Hard?* he replied, *How hard can it really be to give up bad breath, yellow teeth, holes burned into my clothes, and coughing, not to mention all the money I've spent just to endanger my health?* Smart doctor, he took his eyes off the false comfort and evaluated the consequences. If we do that, what we hear will often be the voice of God. That can be habit forming too.

One of the most telling comments I think I've ever heard is the phrase

Get a life!

If we start rejecting things that are false and dig in deeply to God, that's what will happen—the life of God will begin pulsing within. When I come to church, pray, and let God's Word work that's what I'm trying to do—get a life!

...for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the Fountain of living

waters and have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Jeremiah 2:13

Events:

Well, after a sermon like that, let's have some fun. Let's eat, drink, and party a bit, and find ways to do it while serving God. The saddest part of the prodigal son story was that neither boy learned how to party at home and both of them lost something. Practically every time we see Jesus in the Gospels he was eating with his friends. My kind of guy.

In addition to two SNACs , we have a couple of weekend events, in fact it looks like there is something on every weekend. Don't feel obligated to everything, but do plan something.

Promise Keepers will be on the fourth for the men. If you haven't been out to one of these, they are just a relaxed time with a good meal and a chance to open our hearts a bit to one another. T- and M- are wonderful hosts.

On the 11th there will be another movie night at Gary's. We'll be planning a potluck based on a *burger buffet* theme. Many details are open so call for fine tuning of what you'd like to bring. We haven't chosen a movie yet, but it will be family fare, with some fun short features too.

On the 19th we're planning a trip to the zoo, riding on the new Maxx line. We'll meet at the Gateway Transit Center **prior to 11 AM** and go from there as a group. Bring enough money to get into the zoo and buy a lunch somewhere and we'll have a great day (@ \$15?).

Don't forget prayer on the eighth or our monthly meeting on the 25th. As singles we can build and support one another as well as receiving ourselves. Not only do we need to be at some of these activities, but others need us!

Looks like that's about it. Let's remember to keep one another lifted up in prayer.

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