

The Ten Commandments - Part 5: Jacob's Authority, Common Idols, Spiritual Leadership (2/19/2023)

The following text is a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph. The original presentation can be viewed at <https://www.cornerfringe.com/media/t9wjyvh/the-ten-commandments-part-5>

*Portions of this document have been edited from the video message to better present a comprehensive, written document. Special attention was given to preserving the original context, but this document is not verbatim. Scripture verses are in the red text with other quotes in blue. Therefore, it is recommended that this document is printed in color. The Hebrew words are generally accompanied by the transliterate, English word. In most cases, the Hebrew is to be read from right to left.

Shabbat Shalom, Everyone.

Let's dig right in with the first commandment. **Exodus 20:3 - You shall have no other gods before Me.** The very second commandment which we introduced last week is—**Exodus 20:4 - You shall not make for yourself a carved image.** We're going to conflate these two commandments together because whether you're worshiping something God has made, the sun, moon, stars, etc., or you're worshiping something that the hands of man have made, it all falls under this umbrella of idolatry. So, we're going to continue to dig into this topic and look at it.

Today, we're going to the Torah. This wasn't even on my radar. In fact, I was planning on not even making mention of the very story we're going to be covering today, but it's interesting how the Lord works. He kept drawing me and gnawing at me during the week, and He took me back here. And as I began to dig into it, the Spirit exploded. I'm excited about today and digging into this. Remember, this topic is vast. There are so many different dimensions; it wears so many different masks. We have a lot of ground to cover, and with each week that goes by, we need to absorb more and more to have better perspective and understanding. The more equipped we are, the sharper we become. The more faithful we become, the more we can see what the enemy is doing.

So, with that said, let's dig in. **Genesis 31:1-2 - Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has acquired all this wealth." 2 - And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it was not favorable towards him as before.**

This is interesting. I want to give you the backdrop, so you understand where we're right now. If you go back, you have the nice little family of Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, and Esau. And for the most part, things were harmonious until Jacob went and stole the blessing. Things did not go so well after that. Esau wanted to kill him. His mother knew this, so Rebecca says, "I must get him out of here." She wants to send him to her brother in upper Mesopotamia, nowhere near where they are at. It's a long way away. She wants to send him away, not just for one reason but for two reasons. Number one, to flee the wrath of his brother. And number two, "I don't want you taking wives from the women of Canaan." They're wicked, they're a trouble, and a grief of mind to her. So, she sends him off to her brother's.

He finds Laban. He's received with open arms. It's beautiful. In the process, he meets Laban's daughter Rachel. He makes an agreement: I will serve you; I will become your servant for seven years if you give Rachel in marriage to me. Laban agrees. The problem is on the wedding night, Laban swaps Rachel with his firstborn Leah. Then obviously, the next morning Jacob recognizes this, and he says, "Our contract was for Rachel." So, he agrees to serve for another seven years, then Laban will give Rachel as well. So here Jacob acquires two wives for 14 years of servitude and another six years to acquire flocks. So, we're at the 20-year marker. Here is what's interesting: when Jacob came in, he had nothing. Laban was prosperous and he was wealthy. Over the 20-year time, the teeter-totter effect happened: now Jacob is extremely prosperous, and Laban is pillaged. He's totally plundered, and he sees it. All his wealth has been distributed to Jacob. Laban's sons also see it, and they're not happy about it.

Let's move on to **Genesis 31:3 - Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you."** Jacob's being called home. Now after 20 years of servitude to Laban, the Lord is now calling Jacob to the promised land, to the land of his fathers.

Now when you step back, I'm going to tell you this is a perfect example of the *Ma'aseh Avot Si'man Le'banim* - that old rabbinic adage, that proverb that says, "The deeds of the fathers are a sign for the children." In other words, the rabbis looked at the life of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and said the things that happened to them will happen again to the children.

Think about what we just talked about. Jacob was sent to a foreign land, and what happened upon his arrival? He went into servitude, and then he ended up leaving Laban. Then Jacob is being called out while being extremely wealthy and plundering Laban, who is technically his uncle. Put that right on top of what happened in Egypt. Think about Jacob: first, his name is Israel. What happened to Israel? Israel went down into Egypt to be totally put into servitude only to find out God's going to call them out where? To the promised land. Isn't it interesting that on their way out of Egypt they plunder the Egyptians' wealth, and they walk out of there. As we dig into this, you're going to see how highly prophetic this story really is; there's an intense spiritual dimension to it.

Genesis 31:4 - So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock. (Emphasis added). It's interesting to me that the text doesn't just say, "and he called his wives to come to speak to him," or that, "Jacob called for a meeting." It doesn't say that. We're given specific details. When you see situations like this, those details are drawing you in. They're calling you to pay attention. Notice where he calls them to. It says, he calls them to the field, a specific place. But it gets more specific, this is so bizarre; it says, "to his flock." Now think about this: the backdrop here is that Rachel and Leah grew up as pagan worshipers who were worshiping idols. Their father is an idolater; he worships household idols. This is their upbringing, and this is what they grew up in.

It blows my mind that suddenly, we see that the Lord has spoken to Jacob telling him it's time to pick up and make the journey to the promised land. And it specifically says Jacob calls them. Jacob, identified as Israel in the next chapter, calls Rachel and Leah to his flock. So, Rachel and Leah are called to the flock of Israel. That is an incredible thought because every single one of us has that calling into Israel's flock. That is a cool thing to look at.

Moving on, we're getting closer to the heart of the matter. **Genesis 31:5 - and said to them,..** So, this is what he has to say to his wives. **"...I see your father's countenance, that it is not favorable towards me**

as before;" (Emphasis added). This is interesting; I mean you can't make this up. So, when Jacob arrives in Paddan Aram, where Uncle Laban lives, Laban's receiving him with open arms, rolling out the red carpet, and loving on him. That's interesting to me because I know when Israel entered Egypt, Pharaoh did the same thing. Pharaoh rolled out the red carpet. But I know when Israel left, it was not on good terms. When Jacob left, it was not on good terms.

We continue. **Genesis 31:5-7** - "... but the God of my father has been with me. **6** - And you know that with all my might I have served your father. **7** - Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me." He was mistreated. Think about how Israel was dramatically mistreated by the Egyptians. **Genesis 31:8** - "If he said thus: 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: 'The streaked shall be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked." And obviously, by Laban doing this, he's thinking, "They're not going to give birth to speckled and streaked, so I'll maintain my riches and my prosperity, and Jacob's not really going to get anything."

God supernaturally turned the tide and totally opened the storehouse of riches upon Jacob. Then Jacob says this: **Genesis 31:9** - "**So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me.**" (Emphasis added). I love this because you get to see the righteousness of Jacob. He doesn't come in and tell his wives, "Did you see everything that's happened and how I've accumulated all the wealth of your father by my wisdom? Do you see how I've done it? It is because I labored so hard; it was my labor, dedication, and commitment to labor. Look at what I have done." No, he doesn't say that. He doesn't even mention it. He said, "It's God alone." Pure righteousness. Then Jacob goes on to tell his wives, "I've had an encounter with the Angel of the LORD. The Angel of the LORD has communicated to me that it's time to go home; it's time to go back to the promised land."

Now we're going to get into the response, and this is what we read. **Genesis 31:14** - **Then Rachel and Leah answered.** (Emphasis added). I need you to pay close attention as I've highlighted it for you; I want you to absorb it. Rachel and Leah answered together, both. If you do not understand this, you're going to miss the entire context of the rest of the story; you'll never cross the finish line. You've got to understand this. The text is clear. You can read it in the Hebrew, the Greek, the Septuagint, the Aramaic, and the Targums. What you'll see is exactly what it says. This point is so important that I'm going to put it up here for you just to make sure we don't miss this.

The Septuagint LXX says: **And replying, Rachel and Leah said to him.** It's conveying the exact same thing. We move on to the Targums. **Targum Onkelos: And Rachel and Leah answered and said to him.** We move on to **Targum Pseudo Jonathan: And Rachel answered.** This one's slightly a little different. **Rachel answered with the consent of Leah.** Even in the most extreme difference, they're both coming in and answering him. Targum Pseudo Jonathan has Rachel being the lead speaker in this situation. Now the reason I am over emphasizing this is because this is the most important point, and we must get this right, then everything else is going to fall into place. With that said, look at how they respond. **Genesis 31:14** - **and [they] said to him, "Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?"** They're posing a rhetorical question because they can see with their own eyes what has happened to their father's house: it has fallen. It is plundered. There is nothing there for them. Everything is gone.

When you move this up to a prophetic level and you can see how those who are called to the flock of Israel, like we as believers in Yeshua are, what do you understand? What revelation do you have? You have this revelation regarding the world: you realize there's nothing in the world of value anymore, and you know that the world is passing away in the lust of it. Peter, in II Peter 3, talks about the earth and

the works that are in it will be burned up. Yeshua says in Matthew 24 that heaven and earth will pass away. There's a revelation for us. The same revelation that emphasizes what **both** Rachel and Leah knew. There's nothing here; it's completely void.

Moving on. **Genesis 31:15** - "Are we not considered strangers by him?" Think about this statement. Considering the background here: that's their father. "Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and completely consumed our money." They are saying, "Laban devoured our livelihood, and we are estranged from his household." Again, I can tell you there is a practical application for us believers in Yeshua today. We're estranged from the household that we were once a part of because it's devoured; it's as good as dead. We call those things that are not as though they were because we know what's coming. We believe in the Word of the Lord.

Now look at this because this is huge. **Genesis 31:16** - "For all these riches which God has taken from our (our in the plural) father (again, plural as in Rachel and Leah) are really ours (again, in the plural) and our children's. This is both Rachel and Leah speaking. They have come out, and they have acknowledged and confessed that the God of Israel has done this. That's interesting because now his wives step up, and they don't give Jacob credit for his wisdom. They don't give him credit for working and laboring so diligently, which he did. Does he have wisdom? Absolutely. Yet they give him no credit. They point to the God of *Shamayin* (Heaven in Hebrew). They point to the God of Israel.

Let that sink in for a second. Then it gets crazier because then they say this in **Genesis 31:16** - "Now then, whatever God has said to you, do it." (Emphasis added). They not only confess God as the "One who's plundered our father and made you rich," but now they've come on the scene and said to Jacob, "Whatever God has said, you follow it."

Listen to this, wives. If there's any attribute of a godly wife, this is it. It is when you encourage and instruct your house and say, "Listen you stubborn mule-of-a-husband: do what God says!" That's a good wife. My wife does that; she is a good wife. I'm blessed. So, let that soak in regarding what these women have done.

Moving on to **Genesis 31:17** - Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels. Think about this statement. So, his wives come out and tell Jacob to do whatever God has said. The next thing you read is Jacob putting his family on the camels and leaving. "Let's go; we're out of here." That's a good husband.

Genesis 31:19 - Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep. This is important because you can see God's timing is perfect. Ancient Mesopotamian documents from this era record all sorts of interesting things about sheep shearing. One of those things is it wasn't done near your primary residence. You would go on a one, two, even perhaps three-day journey to go shear your sheep. The other thing is it required an incredible amount of help. In other words, it was all hands-on deck. There are ancient Mesopotamian documents that talk about sheep shearing with up to a thousand men involved. Other documents talk about three to four hundred men for days laboring tirelessly to get this done. It is a very laborious task. It wasn't done near the home, so, guess what? Everybody from his house was gone. The Lord timed it perfectly, more than you even know.

One of the other things that you will recognize is that there was one particular time of the year that this would be done. Venture to guess when that was? In the spring.

That is interesting because when God called Israel out of bondage, out of servitude to plunder the Egyptians' wealth, when did they leave? They left in the spring. Jacob and all his family are leaving right in the spring. This is a Passover situation. It's incredible.

So, Laban has gone to shear his sheep, but this is where we get to the pinnacle statement. Here is the payoff of all that emphasis on understanding what Rachel and Leah were involved in because now we read this: **Genesis 31:19 - and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's.** (Emphasis added). Think about this. Number one, she should have been able to do this completely undetected by her father because he's nowhere to be found. No one from his household is to be found because they're all gone. She can walk in totally undetected and steal the pagan idols.

Let me take it a step further so that you understand her intentions: they were deliberate and very thought out. She was very careful. And guess what? She not only didn't want to tell her father what was going on, she also kept the matter from her husband. She told him nothing. So, this suggests that no one knew but Rachel. This isn't a situation where, "I got my moving boxes and oops! You know these little idols fell into my moving boxes." That is not the situation. In fact, we won't get into it today, but as you continue to look at this story, Jacob takes his family and starts making his journey to the land of Canaan. When Laban comes back from Syria, he sees they're gone, and he catches up with them. There are two things he's really upset about: one, that they left without telling him. The second thing: he wants his gods back. He then starts rummaging through all of Jacob's belongings. It's interesting because Rachel, who had taken these household idols, had hidden them under the saddle of her camel. She was sitting upon that saddle and came out with a nice little story to say, "I'm sorry, my lord, but the manner of women is with me. So please be okay with me not getting up." Rachel protected those idols; she did not want those to go back to him. She wanted them, and she kept them.

This is something we must start to process. How in the world is this happening? What is going on here? I want to dig into this because I think it's important when you see Rachel had just got through saying, "God is the One who provided for you; He's made you rich. God is the One you need to listen to and be instructed by." That is what had just come out of her mouth. Even according to Targum Jonathan, it was her mouth. How in the world is it that the next thing you read is that she's grabbing household idols? It goes back to what we were talking about last week. Let's first deal with the prophetic: first, Rachel gave birth to who? Who was her first son? Joseph. And Joseph and his son Ephraim - both of those names are synonymous for the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Do you see that as a coincidence? Did you know that the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed in 722 BC? Why? Because they took idols for idolatry, God destroyed Israel. So, on a prophetic level, as you're looking at what Rachel has done, there's a foreshadow; there's prophecy involved here of what would happen to her children and to Israel. But for today's purposes, I'm less concerned about that prophetic aspect. I think it's significant, but what I'm really concerned about is looking at Rachel because I want to look at the literal act. We need to get into her world to find out what is going on here. Why would she do this especially after we just saw this beautiful confession and acknowledgment?

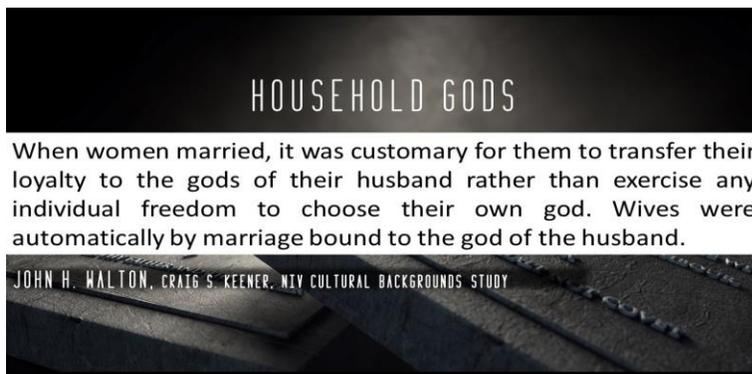
I think it's important to start at ground zero and get the historical backdrop. As I mentioned before, Rachel and Leah grew up in idolatry. And we know for certain Laban is a pagan worshiper of these household idols. When you have household idols, they are part of your household. Your household is co-dependent on those idols.

Who knows how many times Rachel would walk in and see her father Laban bowed and prostrated before them, and she would join him and worship these idols. What are they looking for? They're looking for a blessing, for provision, for prosperity, for protection, and for security. They want all these things.

They trusted in these things from these idols that were set up in their home. She grew up with this, it was her background. And when you look at what she just did, it tells you something. It tells you that these idols still have a place in her heart; they are still there to the point she couldn't leave.

That scares me; this is the scary form of idolatry. She could not leave them despite the beauty and recognizing what God had done. She has seen the power and the blessing that came upon her husband. Despite seeing all that, she still could not leave them. You can hypothesize because of what we read in other places in Scripture. You could see her as she's leaving. And keep in mind she's never left her home; she's never lived in another place other than Paddan Aram. There's no record of this whatsoever that she's lived anywhere else. But now she's being called to a foreign land that she doesn't know. You could see how she would, maybe for added protection, extra security, and a little safety, take these in addition. That is co-dependency; that shows that these idols are definitely in her heart.

Let me build upon this. I want to share with you some scholarly commentary regarding the ancient customs of what existed in the day. This is specifically regarding household idols. Now check this out.



This is interesting because no matter how you look at this situation, obviously from a biblical standpoint and even the confession that came out of Rachel's mouth, it makes no sense for her to go grab her idols.

But even in a secular, historical context of knowing what was common in ancient cultures, if the woman married out of her demographic and

geographical area, there would typically be different gods. She would take on the gods of her husband.

I show you this to show you how strong her emotional connection was to these gods. It was strong to the point that Rachel went in and stole them. That's the very same term used when we get to the eighth commandment in the Ten Commandments. It is the very same, "Thou shall not steal." The emotional connection prompted her to do this, and she hid her sin.

Another aspect to the story is instrumental. We have all hidden our sin at times. That's what we do. In the deepest darkest places in your heart, we just, by human nature, want to hide our sin. That's what she has done.

Across the board, this whole thing is absolutely crazy. It is for me. I look at this, and it's so bothersome because I struggle. As I study and go through the Word, I see this situation repeatedly happening: people calling upon the Name of Yahweh, showing up in the temple, going to praise His Name, all the while they hold Yahweh in one hand and Asherah, the Queen of Heaven, or any other god. How does it get to this?

We might want to take special note of all the examples that we can find here because you know what it's telling me? It's telling me that you're always one thought away from falling into idolatry. That's what it's telling me. It looms over every one of our heads. And if you don't learn how to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, I'm telling you right now the devil will take you to the place that he's prepared for you. It will happen; this is a real threat.

The more we keep digging into Scripture, the more frightening it is because there's not a person here, me first and foremost included, that is beyond being deceived, beyond being foolish. The only way we can fight this, the only way we can combat this, is by clinging to His Word. None of this would have happened if she had just listened to, "You shall have no other gods before Me." That is a sentence that a child could understand. This wouldn't have happened if she knew that we're not to make graven images, we're not to bow down to them, and we're not to serve them. God's commandments are simple words. The amount of protection He provides through His commandments is unreal. It only gives life; it's a beautiful thing.

With that said, I want to jump ahead a couple chapters. I want to give you some good news, and it's also prophetic as well. **Genesis 35:1 - Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God,"** Pay attention to that because this is going to get real. God is going to meet with them. Jacob's making an altar; God's coming. **"...who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother."**

So, you know the backdrop here is this: Israel and his family are in the town of Shechem, and they've made the journey to come into the promised land. They've come to Shechem, but now they're being called to go specifically to Bethel. This place is very well known; it is where Jacob first met God, the place called Jacob's Ladder. It is where he sees angels ascending and descending from heaven, and he sees the Lord standing over the ladder. Jacob calls the place the House of God. Hence the term *Bethel* (Bēṯ 'Ēl, Hebrew), which means, the House of God. "How awesome," he says, "is this place." This is important to you as people because there's a practical application for every single one of us. He's going to meet with God. Guess what Jacob's going to do? He's going to do what every husband and every father in this room is called to do: he's going to rise and be a spiritual leader in his home.

Check this out: **Genesis 35:2 - And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you,"** (Emphasis added). Put them away; get rid of them. It's time to **"...purify yourselves and change your garments."** This entire statement contains three directives: get rid of the foreign gods, purify yourself, and change your garments. Now I want you to understand this is the Gospel. Jacob literally rises in his house and lays down the law because they were going to go meet with God; they need to get their act together now. And so, the first thing he tells them, straight out of his mouth and bringing revival to his own home is, "Cast off your idols." And what is the first commandment? "You shall have no other gods before Me."

These things are not a coincidence. And here's the deal; if he's saying you're to cast off your idols, then what he's saying is there's only One God for you to worship and serve; it is Him alone. And he's telling you it's time to worship God alone, and then to purify yourself through a *mikveh* (a Jewish ritual bath). The practical application here is that you would go through a baptism today as we come into faith in the Messiah Yeshua. He alone can bring us to the Father. We make that confession that there's no one else that can save us; there's no other name given among men by which we may be saved. We call on His

Name. Then we move into baptism, and then guess what it says? Change your garments. In other words, change your ways.

Garments in both the Old and New Testaments represent works. When you read Revelation chapter 19, John sees the righteous clothed in bright, white, fine linen, and it literally says that the linen that they had clothed themselves with is the righteous acts of the saints. When you read Isaiah 64, you find there are filthy garments, and the people are clothed in filthy garments. Why? Because they were in iniquity; they were in sin. When you break the commandments of God, when you abandon His commandments, you will be clothed in filth. And when you observe His commandments, you will be clothed with bright, white linen. This is the reality.

Husbands and fathers, I'm telling you right now this is the call. If you know that there are idols in your house, you better get on it right now, or your house is going to end up like Eli's house. Do you remember what Eli did? He knew about the sins that his sons were committing, and he did nothing. And the Lord brought a curse on his family because he stood there and did nothing. Keep in mind, his kids were adults. How scary is that? He said nothing to them; he let them continue to do what they were doing. Men, if you want to bring a curse on your family, don't stand up and be a spiritual leader; let Satan convince you to be complacent. You might be thinking, "I don't want to push my kids away or offend them or drive them away further." Whoa, stop! Who are you serving? Do you serve the Lord God? Or are you serving your children's emotions that are tied to idols? This is insane. We've got to allow the Word to penetrate us.

Continuing in **Genesis 35:3-4** - "Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." **4. So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods in their hands.** (Emphasis added). Not some; not part. Jacob stood up as a spiritual leader in his home to be prophet and priest, and he said, "Enough of this. Get rid of all of it." This entire family gave them all up. Here's the good news: Rachel would have given up her idols. There were no exceptions here. It says all the idols.

Isn't that interesting? You can read Scripture, and Paul talks about a revival that will come to Israel later, and they will cast off their idols and say, "*Baruch Haba B'Shem ADONAI.*" This is Hebrew for "Blessed is he who comes in the Name of The LORD!" They're going to call on the Name of the Lord Yeshua on a prophetic level.

Talk about a lesson for us today on how to take control of our homes and the importance of how they gave up all the foreign gods that were in their hands. And here is a little backdrop to that: obviously, this would include Rachel. Here's an interesting tidbit: a little leaven leavens the whole lump. The first person in Jacob's family to adhere to these idols is Rachel. Then as Israel comes into the town of Shechem, they inherit a whole boatload of idols. We're also told this in the Targums, so you can reference that. So, there's a boatload of sin, there's a boatload of pagan idolatry going on, and all of it is cleansed because he stood up and led his family in righteousness.

Genesis 35:4 - **...and the earrings which were in their ears;** (Emphasis added). Some scholars refer to this as idol earrings; it's not saying that everybody that has earrings is a pagan worshiper. That's not what's being communicated. I just want to be clear that these are idol earrings that are tied to the idols. **...and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.** He did it there because that was the location he was at. As we look at this good news in verse 4, understand this is the effect of the Gospel. This is what the Gospel does. When you accept the Gospel, this gets purged. Idolatry will get purged. All

these things will get purged: unbelief, doubt, fear, despair, temptation, and insecurity along with many other things. That is the power of the Gospel. It is the power of allegiance and the power of loyalty to the Lord.



I'm going to tell you something: every single one of these and more will lead you directly into idolatry, and every single one of these will keep you there. Do you struggle with unbelief and fear? Trust me when I say this: you will dwell in the land of idolatry. And I'm talking about the fear of the world, not the fear of the Lord. You're going to give in to despair, temptation, lust of the flesh, and lust of the eyes. I'm telling you that

you will be brought to the land of idolatry unless you give it up.

Think about all these dysfunctional behaviors that we have acquired, me included, in our past. If I were to stand up and tell you that I've never been an idolater, what a liar I would be. Of course, I've been in idolatry; it's shameful. Because all I need to say is: have I ever done things out of fear, or haven't done things I should have out of fear? Of course. Have I ever doubted God? Have I not believed in Him at times? To my own shame, I have. It's disgusting.

When you recognize the weight and the gravity of this idolatry, it gives you the fear of the Lord. Unless you have that fear, you will not recognize it's by the fear of the Lord that one departs from evil. If you do not have that fear, you will stay in the land of idolatry all day long. You will stretch out your hand to Yahweh, and you will stretch out your hand to your gods all day long. It is absolutely demonic.

I think about Yeshua's words, which terrify me. **Luke 13:24 - Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many I say to you will seek to enter and will not be able.** (Emphasis added). Many believers are going to press to go into the Kingdom of God, and Yeshua says they will not be able to enter. Why? Because they have idols that they wouldn't let go of. This is just like what we saw in Rachel's life.

Yahweh is great; He has blessed you. Therefore, do what He says. But you are thinking, "I'm going to grab these idols just in case. I need to have this security. I need to know that I'm going to be okay." That's called unbelief. That's called doubt in the One true God to care for you. It's a sin; it's idolatry.

I Samuel 7:3a - Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your hearts," You need to understand that repentance requires all your heart, not just some. You don't get to give up. Let's just say some of you on a good day only have three idols. You don't get to give up two and hold onto the one you are so emotionally connected to. That doesn't work for the Lord. It is all or nothing. That's how He works.

Moving on **I Samuel 7:3a - "... then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you,"** (Emphasis added). If you're going to seek the Lord with your whole heart, if you truly believe that you serve the Lord with your whole heart, then you will do this. All the idols that draw you away from the Lord God will be cast down if you've given Him your whole heart.

Isn't it interesting what you read about the church of Ephesus in the book of Revelation? We get into chapter two, and He says these wonderful things about what they're doing for the Lord. But then He says, "You've left your first love." What happened? Listen to me! What happened is they acquired an idol; they acquired trust in something else.

How many of you have felt so disconnected from the Lord that you feel like you are empty? How many of you have lost that fire and that passion? Do you remember when you used to go to the Word and experienced a burning in your heart? Many of you would testify that you used to go to the Word, and it burned off the pages. It burned in your heart, and now it doesn't do anything for you. Now you can't pick it up and even spend a half hour in the Word. I'm telling you right now that you need to go on a search and find the idols that you've erected in your heart because they're there. That is what has separated you from God: idols. If you're not burning for the Lord, if you have not returned to that first love, to that feeling, and to that connection where you were connected to God, it's because you forsook it all. If that is not happening to you, then you have idols in your heart, and you must get rid of them.

Samuel 7:3b - "... and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only;" (Emphasis added). There's no wiggle room in that. "... and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." (Emphasis added). Then there's deliverance. It doesn't matter if it is the Philistines, demons, or addiction, and I could go on; whatever it is, you're going to be delivered. But it must be everything. You cannot serve God and idols; you just can't do it.

I want to take you to Ezekiel 14. This is where it gets real. **Ezekiel 14:1** - Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. These are elders and leaders. They've come to the prophet; they want to inquire of the One true God, the God of Israel. So, this seems straightforward. **Ezekiel 14:1-2** - And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, **2 "Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts,..."** (Emphasis added).

This is interesting because you start understanding the vastness of this topic. We're not just talking about idolatry in the context of things that God has made such as the sun, moon, and stars. We're not just talking about idolatry with things that man has made. We're talking about things that are in your heart. Now there's a lot of landscape here for idolatry.

Moving on to **Ezekiel 14:3b** - "...and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. **Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?"** (Emphasis added). Really? You're going to come to the Lord saying you want to inquire? He is saying, "You want to pray to Me? You want to take time out of your day to come and pray and petition Me while you're holding on to idols in your heart?" Well, that's not going to work for the Lord.

It gets worse as we see in **Ezekiel 14:4** - "Therefore speak to them, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble in iniquity, **and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols,**" (Emphasis added). Trust me when I say this: that's not good. He's going to answer you by the multitude of your idols. **Ezekiel 14:5** - "...that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart,..." What does God want? He wants your heart. You cannot have idols lingering in the very thing that God wants. **5 - "... because they are all estranged from Me by their idols."** (Emphasis added).

This is what I said before. Guess what? If you have any idols in your heart, it will separate you from the living God. It will take you out. You will never be able to abide in the love of God when you're abiding in the love of the world. It's impossible; you will abide in death. And you may tell yourself like so many Christians and so many examples in Scripture that say, "We're all good with the Lord," but we're not.

Ezekiel 14:7 - "For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the Lord will answer him by Myself." What does that look like? Well, here it is—**Ezekiel 14:8** - "I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. Then you shall know that I am the LORD."

Let me translate this for you. You want to come before the Lord in prayer and honor Him? And then you have idols in your heart, and you think your prayers are going to be answered? Think again. You're going to make the Lord your enemy. That is one of the scariest thoughts that I've ever had in my life of knowing that I'm going to go bow down before the Lord, and I want to call upon the Name of Yeshua. But have we prepared our hearts before we enter into prayer? I can tell you there have been times where I've come to press into prayer, and I've knelt, and I'm going in my prayer closet, and all these thoughts and cares of the world start coming in. I will get up immediately because I am terrified. I will not have any of that. I will not present that before the Lord. I'm not going to sit there on my knees while I'm thinking about mundane, idiotic things of the world that mean nothing to Him.

Scripture says that by those who draw near to Him, He must be regarded as Holy. We can't just approach Him. We must get on our knees, purify ourselves, and have prepared our hearts. And there is a way to do this. You might ask, "Daniel, do I have to be sin-free before I go into prayer?" No, you must be Luke 18: you must be the tax collector. If you have issues and sin in your life, then you must be the tax collector. Prostrate yourself and say, "Be merciful to me a sinner. Lord, I lay out this filth; I lay out these sins. I'm not bringing this as though this is not a big deal that I have You and also have some of my idols." I'm not going to enter prayer like that because guess what? Not only will you not get your prayer answered, but now you're going to have the Lord unleash hell on you. I'm not interested in that. You know, this needs to be part of your prayer understanding, your prayer repertoire of passages in Scripture, saying, "When I go to pray, I need to consider what the Lord is communicating here."

I want to bring up a couple idols that are common in the hearts of men. Money: it is one of the ugliest, nastiest, and one of the most destructive idols that I know of in the entire world. This is an idol that causes people to do things that you couldn't believe.

There was a master's program at a local university down in Minneapolis. I was attending there at the time. I was shocked at how the economics business class was and how these classes were being taught. They trained CEOs at this school. I couldn't believe the way they were training us. Fortunately, I was extremely strong in my faith. They were training us to do whatever it takes to hit that goal. Casualties and damage to relationships are acceptable. These are all acceptable if you hit that number and business goal. I couldn't believe it. It was absolutely demonic! These people chase after this, these people trust this, and this is their security. People are looking at their portfolios because why? It's their safety. In other words, "I draw my security from all that I have in my bank account because it makes me feel safe." Let's be honest: if you go to your bank account tomorrow, and you have six dollars and fifty cents, there's going to be a lot of concerned people who are not used to having that. There's going to be a lot of concerned people whose hearts could totally fall to the ground.

I think about the rich young man in Matthew 19. He told Yeshua that he had been doing all these commandments, and Yeshua tells him to sell everything he has. This young man was very wealthy, and Scripture tells us that he turned around and went away sorrowful and broken. The next thing Yeshua said was, "It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." His apostles were stunned and freaking out because of this. This thing, money, controls people.

Now having said that, I want to be clear. I know Christians who have been blessed, but it's interesting because I've seen the character of God in them. Their money does not control them, they control it, and they use it as a tool to support ministries, widows, and orphans. They use it in brilliant ways.

When you look at this, you can't just say money is evil. In fact, I did put this up here. **I Timothy 6:10 - For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil,...** (Emphasis added). It is not money; it is the love of it. It is an idol when you love it. When you're one of those looking at your portfolio concerned about where the market's going every single day, and you can't open the Word of God, you worship this idol. Please don't go to prayer. That is not going to help your situation to go to the Lord as you've totally given your heart over to this idol. You serve money not God. Paul goes on and says in **I Timothy 6:10 - It's the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

Many times, people I know have had their lives turned into train wrecks because they've fallen into depression because they couldn't achieve financially what they thought they needed to achieve. It devastated them. I've seen it. I have watched marriages be destroyed and end up in divorce. I see what happens when people worship this idol of money. It is total destruction; it's absolutely demonic.

Then we have the idol of entertainment. We could spend hours discussing it. It is just so ridiculous. And again, you know, we can spend three hours in front of a movie screen or in front of a TV, yet we can't spend a half hour in the Word. We can't spend 15 minutes in prayer. Now I ask you, who do you serve? Do an audit of your time. It is horrifying! Yet we have no problem thinking, "I'll throw a quick five-minute prayer to the Lord as I'm on my way to work." Meanwhile, you are heaping up idol after idol in your hearts. You've been spending all the time with your idols. And you want to give the Lord a couple minutes. Do you think that's going to go well? We could talk about TV, sports, and everything else. It's demonic. And just like money, money in and of itself is not an idol. I'm going to say TV, in and of itself, is not an idol, but it's a very popular one. So many people are addicted to it that it's ridiculous.



Then we have sports. Our love for sports in our arenas like the Greeks built and the Roman Colosseum is insane. Talk about vanity! People care more for themselves. They treat themselves as a god; they worship their own bodies. The amount of time that they spend doing this is insane.

I must tell you that many years ago I was introduced into the modeling arena, as they say. One thing that shocks me to this

day is how these women, and some men, had the most restricted diets. They were the most committed and diligent to these diets. Some were literally living on salad and carrots. Why? Because of the look of their body. If their body doesn't look a certain way, it obviously doesn't become marketable; it doesn't become appealing. I've never seen anything like it where they're constantly hungry. You could sit in these rooms talking to these people, and they're starving. These models are starving all the time, and this is my experience with this. It's not to say everyone, as there were models who ate properly, but they are always hungry. Yet, they stayed the course; they didn't miss the mark. They were so committed to their idol. Yet, there are Christians who cannot fast for one day. That's the thing that blew my mind. You have these people serving their gods so much more diligently than the Christians.



Then you have addiction. There are so many forms of addiction such as porn addiction. Understand me, please, because I mean this. If you're caught up in pornography, don't come to the Lord unless you're coming to repent. You are serving a nasty idol that destroys men's minds and hearts, and women as well can struggle with its destruction.

Then we have the addiction of the bottle. I've seen what alcohol has done and how all people want to do is hold the bottle. All they want to do is tip it back. They serve their god. Think about drugs. We could go on and on listing all the different things. Gambling is another one. All these things are nasty idols that people are serving. They serve and worship them. Yet some of these people believe that they're saved. They believe that they're just fine, and their relationship with God is just fine.

I remember one of the things from my life experience that is insane. This was well over 15 years ago. I was having a conversation with one of my extended family members. He and his wife were in this situation where they got into a discussion over theology that turned into an argument. The only problem was they were all drunk. He was telling me this. I asked him, "Does it not bother you that you guys are attempting to discuss theology when you're all intoxicated? Are you serious?" At that point, he understood; he got it. But this is the delusion: they want to talk about God while they're literally serving their god.



You have pride of life. There are all these men driven more to success. They are wanting the admiration of other men; they are meeting the glory. There are so many gods that we tend to lift up, and they must come down. I'm telling you that Yeshua is looking for a pure and spotless bride. These are people who have given Him their whole heart with no compromise. If you are one of these people, you're not going to share your heart with the things of the world because these things are passing away.

Yeshua tells us that heaven and earth are passing away, but His Word will by no means pass. Cling to what is eternal not to the things of the earth.

I want to end with this verse. **Ezekiel 14:6** - "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: **"Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations."**" (Emphasis added). Stop looking at them; make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lust. Yeshua says, :If

the eye is good, the whole body will be full of light, but if the eye is bad, it will be all full of darkness. You cannot serve two masters; you will love the one and hate the other, or you'll be loyal to one and you'll despise the other.”

This is about repentance. This is the heart of the Lord; He is merciful and compassionate. We don't want to test His patience, and you certainly want to stop approaching Him when you're holding on to these idols. Don't do it. Approach Him like Luke 18. Be a tax collector who bows down and says, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner. I lay these things out. Take them from me and forgive me.”

With that, we are going to close in prayer.