

Broken Cisterns: Intro - Week 1

What motivated you to join this Sunday School class today?

How can I help you as a teacher as we move through this biblical discussion together?
(How can other class attenders be helpful to you?)

My Target: Get us thinking biblically about God's command for exclusive worship and its implications to our daily living.

We Worship A No Other Gods God:

1st & 2nd Commandments

Deuteronomy 5:6-10 (Also Ex 20:3-6)

[6] "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

[7] "You shall have no other gods before me.

[8] "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. [9] You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, [10] but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (ESV)

In these first two commandments, God sets a foundation for our relationship with Him.
God wants exclusive worship from His people.

The Shema (Means to "listen" or "hear" as the first word declares)

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

[4] "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. [5] You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. [6] And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. [7] You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. [8] You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. [9] You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (ESV)

All seems like an impossible standard.

What does all our heart, soul and might look like practically?

I think about exclusivity, I think about consistency and frequency, I think about longevity. Then I partner that with talking with God, learning about God, studying

His word, ultimately walking in steadfast obedience to what I am learning.
Investing my treasure in the things of God.

I chose the Deuteronomy 5 text over Exodus 20 because it includes a characteristic of God that ties closely into why God is an exclusive God. Verse 9 connects the reason for not bowing down in worship to God being a Jealous God.

Our God is a Jealous God

Exodus 34:11-17

[11] "Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. [12] Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. [13] You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim [14] (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), [15] lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, [16] and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods. [17] "You shall not make for yourself any gods of cast metal. (ESV)

What do you think about God's jealousy?

We can begin to see the clear connection between our God being a jealous God who demands exclusive worship and therefore has zero tolerance for idols.

Idols are sometimes thought of narrowly (physical representations which we literally worship as gods) and other times more broadly (as competitors for our affections). In this class I anticipate leaning more into the second of these two types of thinking. While most American Christians don't typically worship physical objects they do tend to struggle heavily with diverted affections. While our relationship with those affections don't always feel like they fall into the category of idolatry for us, we may more readily admit that we are placing more hope in them than we ought to. In return these broken sources of hope often leave us disappointed. Like the empty promise of the fruit of the garden they resemble the truth and yet leave us distant from God walking in brokenness. They are broken cisterns. We look to them for something they cannot give. They were not designed to give. Often our pursuit can fit into that idea of celebrating the gift rather than the giver of the gift. Even if we find a momentary pleasure in them, as we must if we are drawn to them, they ultimately bring less into our lives rather than more. When we replace joy in God with joy in something outside of God we end up having less than God. Only as we

enjoy that good through a lens of God-centered worship can we experience that good as God intended it.

“The core evil of the original sin was believing the forbidden knowledge of good and evil would yield more satisfaction than God. The core evil of ancient Israel was believing idols would yield more protection and prosperity than God. The core evil in all our sins is believing some broken cistern will give us greater life and joy than God.”

Jon Bloom, What Sin Will Never Quench, desiringgod.org

In *Sipping Saltwater* by Steve Hoppe, a book I read in preparation for this class, he describes our misplaced relationship with these gifts like sipping saltwater.

“In our nagging state of thirst for paradise lost, what do we drink? Saltwater. We consume things that look and feel and sound like they can quench our thirst. They promise unmatched pleasure. They promote limitless comfort, joy, strength, peace, and excitement. They vow to remove our fears, tears, worries, guilt, and shame. They pledge to fill the voids in our hearts and soothe our aching souls. They promise paradise. But they can’t deliver. We drink them, but our thirst remains unquenched. In fact, we are left thirstier. And we experience devastating hangovers — negative spiritual, emotional, physical, and relational consequences — as a result.”

What is this saltwater? “This saltwater doesn’t come from the ocean. It comes in a variety of forms from the world around us and our hearts within. It comes in the form of money, sex, control, or comfort. It comes in the form of busyness, people, food, or works. It can come in the form of anything. ... Even though we are thirsty for paradise lost, we drink saltwater instead — in a million different forms.”

Steve Hoppe “*Sipping Saltwater*”

Why do we look for things outside God to meet our needs?

Impatient, I want things God won’t provide, God give differing portions and I want control, tangible versus intangible.

What do we do about the fact they sometimes do satisfy? In the moment and for a time. Drugs are great while I am high. Family fills my life with meaning and joy while they are there. Money provides opportunities. All these things can bring satisfaction in various ways for various periods of time but rooting our satisfaction in God is the only thing that will last into the other side of eternity.

Biblical Metaphors for Idolatry:

Adultery

The concept of spiritual adultery against God is a major theme throughout the Old Testament (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:20; Ezekiel 16:15-19). This theme is illustrated especially well in the book of Hosea. The prophet's wife, Gomer, symbolizes the infidelity of the children of Israel (Hosea 2:2-5; 3:1-5; 9:1). Hosea's commitment to Gomer symbolizes God's faithful, patient love with His erring people.

How does the intensity of this metaphor fit the context of our idolatry?

Broken Cisterns

Jeremiah 2:12-13

[12] Be appalled, O heavens, at this;
be shocked, be utterly desolate,
declares the LORD,
[13] for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living waters,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
broken cisterns that can hold no water. (ESV)

How does this metaphor inform our understanding of the exchange we make in idolatry?

What are some modern day cisterns we invest our water into?

Reputation, Control, Experience, Politics, Entertainment, Security (Resources \$, House, Retirement), Physical Cravings (Food, Sex, Drugs, Alcohol, Comfort), Relationships (Social, Family)

Control / Significance / Comfort - Tierce Green is on the presentation team of 33 The Series,

Love, Money, Success, Power, Hidden Idols - Tim Keller in Counterfeit Gods

Modern Replacements:

James 4:4–10

[4] You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [5] Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? [6] But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." [7] Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. [8] Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. [9] Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. [10] Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. (ESV)

What is friendship with the world that brings enmity with God?

Losing the Ephesians 2 perspective. I once was but I am not. Receiving my values from the world rather than from God.

What is the prescription for avoiding such enmity?

Submit to God. Obey. Resist the devil. Say no to temptation and lies. Draw near. Read, pray, confess, worship, grow, spend time with. Cleanse hands. Purify hearts. Sanctification? Feel the gravity of that which is grave.

1 Corinthians 10:1–22

[1] For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, [2] and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, [3] and all ate the same spiritual food, [4] and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. [5] Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

[6] Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. [7] Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." [8] We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. [9] We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, [10] nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. [11] Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. [12] Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. [13] No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

[14] Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. [15] I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. [16] The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? [17] Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. [18] Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? [19] What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? [20] No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. [21] You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. [22] Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? (ESV)

Next Week and Beyond:

Next week my wife and I will be in southern California spending the weekend with Lauren celebrating her birthday and visiting her for a few days. I am going to have a Tim Keller video for you all. Tim Keller a great mind and a great man of God wrote a book Counterfeit Gods and a few years ago he spoke at the Gospel Coalition on Idols and the Gospel. In this message he helps us understand how common modern cultural value have become idols inside and outside the church. I think you will be well served by Keller, if you've never encountered his stuff before you have been missing out.

In the weeks that follow I believe I will follow a format where we examine some modern idols. First considering what the Bible has to say about them and then thinking about how we might keep such gifts in the rightful place. I don't want us to leave every week confident we are idolaters. I want us to leave convinced we get more by getting God. I want us to think about how we can honor God and fill our hearts with meaningful joy by keeping the things of this world in their proper place.

Let's pray.