

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

TEMPTATION, TESTING AND A WAY OUT | CHURCH IN THE WILD

RYAN BRAMLETT | SEPTEMBER 29, 2024

Traders Point how are we doing? Hey, it's so good to be with you today. Everyone at the campuses, welcome.

Pumped to be continuing in our series Church In The Wild. Right? We've been studying through this book, this letter, 1 Corinthians, written by a guy named Paul to a church that was starting out in a city called Corinth.

They were a young church. They were an excited church. But you get to feel that they had a lot of spiritual starts and stops. Right? They were all excited. They had all the momentum. The wind was at their back. But then they started moving into this space of like, "I kind of miss my old life. I kind of miss the things that I used to do. Some of the new things, now, with Jesus are a little bit harder. And they begin to believe some lies, "Maybe I was better off before."

Have you ever been in a season like that? You're doing the right things. You're doing the things that you know you should be doing. But then you face a little discomfort, a little bit of pain and you're like, "Maybe I was wrong." Right?

Hypothetically, say you start working out again. And before you were fine. You weren't in great shape. But then you started working out and now you wake up and your legs are sore. And you get out of bed and you're like, "Oh wow. That hurts."

And now things that you used to be able to do are problems you have to really think about, like taking the stairs. It wasn't a problem before, "Now I have to really think through each step." And as you're making your way up the steps you are like, "Should I really be working out? I kind of like going up these stairs without hurting."

But the truth is that there is short term pain that we know is setting us up for the long term. And we know that we need to hold onto this discipline in the mean time even though it's hard.

That's the tension that we are looking at today in 1 Corinthians, chapter 10. What do we do when it's not about our physical health but what do we do when our life in Jesus starts to not look as good as our old life? That tension where the spiritual starts and stops as we go through life and we begin to kind of step away from God and we think, "Well, maybe I'm better off without Him. Maybe I'd be better off if I'm in control. I kind of liked the way my life used to be."



And then in a slow, subtle process we exchange God being Lord and Savior and we replace Him with this. And whatever this is the Bible calls idolatry. That exchange where God goes from ultimate to something else. I begin something else to live my life for. Something else becomes most important.

That's what we're going to look at today. What is that? What is it that is so tempting about idolatry? What is it inside of us that brings us to this space of wanting distance from God when it seems all He wants is closeness with us?

This idolatry shows up over and over again in your Bibles from page one all the way through. There was a Jewish Rabbi, a teacher, who when he was asked, "How to you frame up... What is the theme that you would give to the Old Testament?" He said, "Idolatry."

And when God was saving His people, when He was first establishing the Jewish people, He gave them Ten Commandments. Ten rules to help them live this new life that He had for them. The first two: Have no other God's before Me (a call to idolatry). And the second one, very clear: Don't make any idols for yourself.

There is this tension and this longing for more, this idea that our hearts never seem to be fully satisfied and we quickly look out for something to end the longing. And we settle for counterfeits.

So, what we're going to be looking at today is what is that and how can we get in front of it and what do we do when we find ourselves in that season. Maybe you are there right now. So, we're going to be in 1 Corinthians, chapter 10, starting in verse 1. And I don't know about your Bibles, but in mine it gives it a title for chapter 10. And it says:

LESSONS FROM ISRAEL'S IDOLATRY

So, what we're going to see is we are going to look back and there was a lot of what they faced in the wilderness that you and I can use for our lives as well as we are wrestling with temptation. And the three things, if you are taking notes, that I want you to write down—three lessons from Israel's idolatry"

TEMPTATION

TESTING

A WAY OUT

That's what we're going to be working through. We're going to work through each one of these: temptation, testing, and a way out. So, with that said, 1 Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 1. Paul says:

"I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors,"

I mean they've been Christians for 10 minutes. I love how he brings them into the fold and says, "Our ancestors." Now, my people are your people. It's beautiful. He says:

"...our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground." (NLT)

So, we're going to learn some lessons. And instead of just teaching the lesson, Paul is going to tell a story. Paul turns into Papaw Paul. Like, "Everyone gather around. I want to tell you a story about our people." And then he talks about the wilderness. If you are not too familiar with the Bible, the wilderness is language that is almost always used for the Exodus. It's this time where God rescued His people from Egypt and then they were in the desert for 40 years. That's the wilderness.

And what Paul does is he says, "Your ancestors are mine." And then he tells a story in a way that he wants them to see that their story is your story. And it's our story. He says, "I want you to think about them as they were rescued. God brought them through the Red Sea. They walked through walls of water. They experienced the miraculous. Paul says, "That's the same thing for you. You have Jesus. That represents you moving from death to life. That's what we celebrate."

And he says, "You have Jesus. Just like they were rescued out of the slavery they were in in Egypt, you have been rescued from the slavery of your sin." Do you see how he has drawn the connections together. And he says, "Just how they had the pillar, they had the presence of God that led them and guided them through the wilderness, today, in the city of Corinth," and today in our city, "you have the very Spirit of God who is leading you and guiding you."

We all have it. So, he made common ground. But then he brought them to this place that they would have remembered the wilderness story. And it wasn't all just butterflies and rainbows. They walked through walls of water; they were in the desert and it was an 11 day hike from where they were to get to the Promised Land where God was taking them.

But I can tell you it would have been a lot shorter of a book if that really happened. But once they crossed over onto dry land, they didn't just skip and frolic into the Promised Land. (I can skip) What happened? It goes from 11 days to 40 years—40 years. A trip that was supposed to take them 11 days. What got in the way? Temptation, testing, and not trusting God. And Paul says, "Hey, we're going to take some things that they learned in those 40 years and I'm going to break it down for you in one chapter."

TEMPTED WITH A LIE: GOD IS NOT ENOUGH

There is a lot of temptation. We could point to this thing or that. But what I want to do today is do our best not to live on the surface. I want to get to the root of things. I want to get to the why of things and really let us wrestle this week. Because behind their

temptation is the same thing that is behind our temptation. And they were with a lie that you and I face as well: God is not enough.

You look through any idol, any temptation, the reason you are going to say yes to it is because of this belief, this lie that is in the back of our minds: God is not enough so I need to do this. I need to take this. I need to be a part of this.

That's what the Israelites wrestled with over and over and over again, year after year. And it takes no time at all. I'm not exaggerating. I'm going to say it again. They walked through walls of water. They crossed the sea on dry land looking from left to right—walls—knowing God did this.

They get to the other side and they were like, "I don't like this." They began to romanticize their time in slavery. They were like, "It wasn't that bad. I kind of liked it." Look at this in Exodus, chapter 16:

"If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt,' they moaned. 'There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death.'" Exodus 16:3 (NLT)

What about our pots of meat, Moses? "Yeah, okay. You did with the slavery thing, walls of water, it was pretty cool. But what about our fine meats and cheeses?" And they began to see all of the things that God hadn't done yet instead of focusing on the miraculous, instead of focusing on the fact that the pillar was God in their presence. The miraculous had been done. God had rescued them from something and had promised to take them somewhere. But they were getting lost in the moment, focusing on what they didn't have.

Here this:

The belief that God is not enough will give birth to an idol

The belief that is not enough will give birth to an idol. So, as you look at your life, as you are tempted to begin to think about the things that you don't have or the things that you want, and you're recognizing that the desires in your heart, where are those areas where you are believing that God is not enough? He's Lord over some areas, He's Lord over eternity, but does He govern your Friday nights? Is He over your budget? Or is He just there for Sundays and Bible studies?

God wants it all. All of your heart. Have you given it to Him? Are you starting to believe a lie that God is not enough, "So, I need to find it elsewhere." And here's the thing. We're trying to get to the root. I don't want to live on the surface. And a lot of times when we talk about temptations or struggles our sins, we always start with something out there—that thing is tempting me. But I want us to get to the root. I want us to look and see what Scripture says about temptation. Look at what it says in James, chapter 1, verse 14. It says:

“Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away.” (NLT)

This is why God has such a problem with idolatry. Divided hearts leading to empty promises that drag us away from Him. It comes from within. Our desires entice us and drag us away.

I love the way one theologian says it: our hearts are like idol factories. You see, we were made, not to be on our own, we were made in the image of God for God. We were made to be dependent on Him. But because of sin, because of this separation, now our hearts are prone to wander. And they quickly attach to the next thing.

We know that we have a longing. We know we have an ache. And then we find something and we settle for a cheap substitute, because there is something, ultimately, that we are looking for. This sense of completion, of being satisfied, of feeling complete. And idols become the things that are handy. They become the things that we can have more control over—the things that we can see.

And the idols from back then to today have changed, but we still have to be aware of them. None of us are immune to idolatry. We look back on the stories from the Bible and say, “I can’t believe they bowed down and worshiped golden calves,” or they had these statues and they thought, “This is going to help them.”

We may not have statues anymore, things that we bow down in front of, but it’s never been about the thing. It’s always about the thing behind the thing. See:

Idols aren’t real, but what we look for them to give us is very real

Idols aren’t real, but what we look for them to give us is very real. For example, in the Old Testament, infertility was a big reason why people went after idols and began to worship demons, pretty much. Why did they do that? Because they believed... There was a lie in the back of their heads that fertility was needed, “We need to be able to pass on our line. We need to have children. It doesn’t seem like God is going to give them to us, so we need to find a way around what God is doing and take control of it ourselves.”

We still do the same thing today. And like I said, instead of just looking at the surface level idols, because we can all share in some of those whether it’s money, our jobs, our phones—whatever is behind that thing, what I want us to do is get down to the deep roots.

I love the way Tim Keller talked about idol roots. He kind of broke them down into a few categories. We may see the fruit of some idolatry up here, but unless we get down and understand the why of why our hearts long for these things and why as soon as we knock one down, another one is going to pop up... So, look at the four idol roots that the late, great Dr. Keller talks about:

4 Idol Roots



- Power: longing for influence or recognition
- Control: longing to have everything according to my plan
- Comfort: longing for pleasure
- Approval: longing to be accepted or desired

Chances are when you read that list something is already beginning to come to the surface, like, "Yes, that's me. That's my why. That's what I want more than anything. And for some of you, you are like, "I think it's more than one. That's okay. Turn it into Panera. You can pick two, whichever two you relate to.

Which one is it? What is it that you long for? And here's the thing, this is why we have to get below the surface, because your idol and my idol might be money, but unless we get to the root of it, we're still not going to get to why we really want things. Because for you, you might want money for power, control. And you believe that if you had a little more then finally you could have control over your life.

Whereas someone else may have a different driver for why they are so focused on money. It may be comfort. They just want a good life. They just want things to be okay and to do whatever they want whenever they want. To feel comfortable. That's their desire and that's why they've made money an idol.

That's why today I just want to challenge all of us, when we are looking at that list:

Recognize the root

What is it that your heart most desperately longs for? What is that ache that is inside you that makes you feel like it needs to be satisfied by any means necessary. I'll attach to anything if it just puts me at ease.

I know when I look at that list, the one that comes to the surface for me is acceptance. The older I get the more I think that it will be a thing of the past, I won't struggle with it. But the truth is that I do—this idea of being approved of, to be accepted. And the older I get the more I see that when I was younger it had a lot to do with allowing myself to do things that I didn't really want to do but I wanted to fit in, I wanted to belong and I did things that weren't good.

Now, that's still a temptation but also on the other side, it stops me. I worry so much about being accepted and approved and liked that it stops me from doing what God wants me to do because I'm worried. And that's scary. I don't want to be in that place. I'm just telling you where I am.

So, it's not enough just to identify the idols, we've got to get to the root of it. And here's what I think you'll find. At the root of every idol is that lie that God is not enough and it's wrapped up in and it's being choked by:

FEAR

Fear. You've got to think that's why these idols come. There is a fear that God isn't going to control the situation so I need to, "God isn't going to approve of me, so I need to do what I can to make sure that I approve of myself." "God isn't going to comfort me, so I need to make sure that I take care of myself." "He won't." And we begin to give birth to idols one after another.

I know that I wrestle with that and if that is you today I want to give you some good news. Whatever that lie and that fear brought to your attention and you begin to believe that, "He won't so I need to," I want to draw your attention to Scripture. I want you to look at Romans, chapter 8, verses 31 through 32. Look at this. It says:

"If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?" (NLT)

He won't? Won't He? If He was willing to not even stop what meant sparing His own Son, if He meant it and He did it by emptying out heaven, if He went to a cross for me and you, if He died and sacrificed—what would stop Him now? What makes us think that He won't? He will. He will comfort us. He will protect us. He will give us what we absolutely need. He will.

That's the truth that we need in the midst of the temptation. And then on the second part of this is the:

TESTING

I want to be very clear here. God does not tempt us. We saw that that comes from inside, it comes from the devil. But God does test us. Alright? God does not tempt us. Look at this. James, chapter 1, verse 13:

"And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, 'God is tempting me.' God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else." (NLT)

Okay? So we need to make a distinction. God is not some cruel God trying to tempt us, trying to get us to fail. He's a good God. He does test us. Okay? And that's what we're going to see in the Exodus story, in the wilderness story. They made it through. They are already complaining about the pots of meat that they don't have, and God is going to respond by testing them. Look back at Exodus. He said:

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Look, I'm going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions.'" Exodus 16:4 (NLT)

So, what happens? He hears the grumbling. He sees where they really are and says, "I'm going to test them. I need them to trust Me." So, here's the test, "You are right here in the

middle of the desert, you have no food. You don't think that I'm going to provide. Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to make it very clear that I am the One I say I am.

"I am the faithful One. I am the One who rescued you. I'm going to drop down manna from heaven. And every morning the ground is going to be filled with this stuff. But, here's the test, 'Only take enough for that day. I want you to trust that I'll provide more tomorrow.'" That's the test. They failed the test very quickly.

But there is something in here for us because maybe you're wondering and you are like, "I feel like God is testing me and this test is going on and on. It's been like a week." You know how long He tested the Israelites with this one test? Forty years! Forty years. They had to live off of this and live believing that God would provide enough for that day and then He would provide again the next day.

God was taking them on this journey. And remember, He rescued them from Egypt and He was taking them to the Promised Land. And I want to give you a little bit of detail in this story that I think really brings it to life and help us in the midst of this season when we are being tested. Because what do we know about the Promised Land where He was taking them? Look at this, Exodus 3. He says:

"I have promised to rescue you from your oppression in Egypt. I will lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey." Exodus 3:17 (NLT)

So, think about this in context of the testing. They are in the desert. He's dropping down manna, but one day He's going to lead them to this land of milk and honey. Remember that.

Now, go back to I Corinthians, chapter 10. He says:

"All of them ate the same spiritual food, and all of them drank the same spiritual water." 1 Corinthians 10:3-4 (NLT)

So, they ate the same food. This was the food that fell down from heaven. Does anyone know what that was called:

Manna

Manna, right? Manna. You ever had manna? Me neither. They didn't serve it at Burger King when I was there. But here's what blew my mind this week and I just want to nerd out for a little bit and I want you to go with me. Okay? That's what God provided for them. What do we know about manna? Not a lot. But look at this. Look at the description:

"The Israelites called the food manna. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey wafers." Exodus 16:31 (NLT)

Every day He would give them a taste of honey. Every day He was giving them a reason to fix their eyes up and to remember His faithfulness. He's saying, "Don't get lost in this. This is not the ultimate thing. This is just an appetizer. But I want you to hold on to it—bread crumbs from heaven that are going to lead you to what I really have for you."

But what did they do? They got frustrated and bothered by the fact that it was just manna. This is not enough. This is same thing for 40 years. And God is saying, "That's not the ultimate thing. That's not where I want your eyes to be. This is just a taste."

And for me and you in our desert seasons in life, in the tension we face to place our hope in something else, I want us to hear this—there is a little bit of honey in our desert.

There is this peace that God is leaving you bread crumbs, providing for you to keep going and to get what He actually promised.

But here's the tension. Here's where we all fail a lot of times. We get caught on the gift instead of seeing who is the One who gave it to us and what His plan is for it. You see:

Every gift we get is a cue for us to fix our eyes on the Giver of that gift

That's what He wanted them to do. To get a little bit and say, "This tastes a little bit like honey. Remember God's promises? Remember where He is going to take us?

Remember what He brought us out of? Okay, there is a little bit here for me to continue on."

But this whole thing implodes when we begin to make good things God things. When we take this little gift that was never meant to be everything—just an appetizer, it was just a foreshadowing of what is to come—and we make it ultimate.

I see this happen all of the time—especially within marriage. Marriage is a good gift that God gives some of us. But here's the tension. Our spouses a lot of times become idols because we look to them and we long to feel complete, we long to feel fulfilled, and now we have our person.

"Of all of the people in the world—I've got one, You're going to be everything. You're going satisfy every need that I have. You are going to complete me." And then you get two days in and you are like, "Nah. Something went wrong. I need to push harder."

Instead of—this is where we get caught—taking the manna and believing it is everything when it is supposed to lead us to something else. The gift is good, but it always brings us to the Giver of the gift.

Marriage is not ultimate. It is a gift. Your spouse was not made to, nor can, fulfill you or completely satisfy you. What you're supposed to get with this good gift is a reminder every day to look up and to be reminded about what the Bible says about marriage. He

uses is as an illustration, a foreshadowing to help lighten or illuminate the way of this mystery through God and His church, Jesus and His bride, “This is supposed to make me holy. This is a good gift that I have to bring my eyes to heaven and remember all that Jesus did for me.”

Money is the same way. It is a good gift. You have something good. And you can do good things with it, but don’t let it become ultimate. Look to the Giver of that gift and say, “Okay, what does this money make me think of? Not, “How can I get ultimate control and how I can be ultimately satisfied.”

It’s bread crumbs, “How can I use this? How can this remind me of the generous God in heaven who I serve? How can I use this to bring heaven to earth?” We begin to see through things. They no longer become ultimate. This is just one gift out of many.

Maybe the next question that is in the back of your mind is, “But why?”

WHY DOES GOD TEST US?

Why does God test us? Doesn’t He know everything? Doesn’t He already know the answers to the questions? He does. But you don’t. I don’t. So, we need to draw this distinction. He doesn’t tempt us, but He does test us.

And it’s an okay question to ask why. Why does He test us? I’m telling you, this book is doing some good stuff. Deuteronomy is going to talk about, once again, the lessons learned in the wilderness. And it’s going to give us why God tested them. And it’s the same reason He tests me and you today. Look at this. Deuteronomy, chapter 8. He says:

“Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

“For all these forty years your clothes didn’t wear out, and your feet didn’t blister or swell. Think about it: Just as a parent disciplines a child, the Lord your God disciplines you for your own good.” Deuteronomy 8:2-5 (NLT)

So, he gives us a handful of things right here for why God tests us. And I just want to pull out three from Deuteronomy 8 right here. Okay? So:

Why does God test us?

- To prove our character

To prove our character. That’s why you give anyone a test for anything. To prove what they really know. That’s why a teacher gives you a test. And if your teacher tried to give

you a test and you are like, “Hey, actually, I’m good. I know everything that is on the test. I don’t need to take it,” she’d probably be like, “Okay, that’s great. Let’s just take it to see. Okay?”

So, when God tests us it an act of love to reveal to us, to prove what is really inside. We may have some beliefs of who we think we are, but until we’re tested we don’t really know. So, God tests us to prove our character.

The second one is:

- To humble us

There is this problem with me and you and it doesn’t look like a problem on the surface but it can become one. You are unbelievably talented and good at a lot of things. And you can control and build. And after enough time with enough successes you can begin to believe that you don’t need anyone or anything.

A lot of times God will allow us to be tested to humble us, to remind us that we’re not as good or as good looking as we thought we are. We were made to do life with Him. In these moments He humbles us. He shows us our deficiencies. And the hope is that when we are tested, we would jump back to Him. We would recognize what is real and then we would come back to Him. So, He humbles us.

And then finally:

- To strengthen us for what’s next

God is testing us and it says it’s like a parent and a child. It is a good thing. So, any test that you are in with God, it is for His glory and your good. That is why you are in the test. So, maybe you’re wrestling with that right now, “Why am I going through this? Why does it seem like as soon as I get my life together as soon as I get a little bit comfortable as soon as I’m okay something else comes?”

And I just want to give a little reminder, it’s not my fault, but there’s a good chance that it is going to happen. If you are in that season right now where you are like, “Life is great. Nothing could be better. I just finally feel like I have handle on things,” it’s like; don’t check the mail today—probably. Alright?

Because it’s in that space where we get overly confident God has to step in and say, “Hey, there is something more here. I have more for you. I have more in mind for you and your life. And left alone you would play it pretty safe, but I’m going to pull you out. I’m going to call you out to more.”

The other thing that I love about those verses is that it just slides this in there. And I want us all to think about this this week. He just throws in a few blessings. And it’s like they didn’t even realize it until this moment when they are reading the words.

He's like, "Also, just remember this. Think about this. For 40 years you wore the same flea market sandals that your aunt made and they never wore out." And I picture them looking down like, "Yeah, that's right. We never once changed our sandals in 40 years." And God is like, "I did that. I did that. That wasn't your aunt who just worked really well with leather. I did that."

And then He was like, "You walked for 40 years in a desert, how many blisters did you get? None? Swelling? None? You're welcome."

There are so many things in our life, we get so caught up in what we don't have, that we miss so many blessings. So, what is it this week that you can just pause and look back and realize, "What God has done in my life that I have not given Him the proper appreciation He deserves?"

That's what He is saying. It's this testing. And then He says that there is:

A WAY OUT

You will be tempted. There is a time in the desert, time in the wilderness, but He will provide a way out of that wilderness. I want to go back and close out with 1 Corinthians, chapter 10. Look at this. He says:

"If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure." 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 (NLT)

Now, this is a verse that has tripped up a lot of people and it has caused a lot of people to walk away from God when he says, "God will not give you more than you can handle." And some of you are like: "Objection. He seems to do that a lot." Or, "He must think really highly of me. Because over and over again I feel like I get brought to my knees. Over and over again I feel like I get the air knocked out of me. Over and over again I feel like I'm in over my head. So, how do you justify what that says with my life?"

I want to bring us back to what he's saying and what he is not saying. Remember God has promised to be faithful to you. He has bound Himself up with you. So, it is no longer just you. It is you and Him. So, when Paul says this, he's not saying you will never experience more than you can handle, he's saying that you will never experience more than God can handle. God will be with you. God has promised to never leave you nor forsake you. He will be with you every single step of the way.

Here we go. Come on. I apologize at the campuses, for the delay and the applause break. It was there. I promise.

But that's where they are in this space. They are starting to believe the lie that God is not enough, "I have received more than I can handle. I don't know where to turn. So, I'm



going to turn to something, anything that will help me get out of this way.” I think what God wants us to hear today is that He is with you, He is faithful.

And here’s what the devil knows. He can never pull you from the hands of God. You are protected, you are His, you have been sealed by His Spirit. The only thing he can do is make you live off of the crumbs and believe that you are starving. The only thing that he can do is get you to believe that God is holding out on you, that God could but He’s not.

And we begin to think, “Okay, maybe I can get more somewhere else,” what God wants all of us to know—if you want to know the way out from the idolatry, the temptation—it is to remember God’s faithfulness. Go back to the beginning. Every time God talks about what He is about to do, how He is about to test them, He always reminds them who He is, “I am the God who rescued you. I am the God who saved you. I am the God who has done, over and over and over again, things that you couldn’t imagine or believe. I want you to remember that I am faithful.”

Remember God’s faithfulness

And as we’re closing out today I want us to hold onto this. As we begin to remember this is not just the end of the sermon, this is what we hang on to. This is the application. This is what really makes all of the difference in our lives. When we come face to face with the same temptation, it’s to remember that God is faithful. He and He alone is faithful.

I love the way that Jackie Hill Perry says this. She says:

“If God is holy, then He can’t sin. If God can’t sin, then He can’t sin against me. If He can’t sin against me, shouldn’t that make Him the most trustworthy being there is?”
Holier than Thou

This is why God is saying, “I alone am worthy of worship because I alone am faithful. I alone will never fail you.”

Think about all of the things that you have placed your faith in. Think about all of the things when you are thinking about those idols in your life. Have they ever failed you? Yes. Has money ever failed you? Yes. Has alcohol or drugs ever failed you? Yes. Has your spouse ever failed you? Mine hasn’t. Don’t answer that. But, no the answer is: Yes, they will.

Remember God’s faithfulness

And what God is trying to get us to do remember is, “Hey, there is only One who deserves your worship and it’s Me. Remember My faithfulness.”

And then finally:

Realize the better “Yes”

A lot of times with idolatry we think that the short answer is, "Alright, I'm just going to say no to this thing. I'm just going to stop it. I'm going to avoid it. I'm going to run away." And that is part of it. You need to let go of some things that are killing you. But if your whole life is built around no eventually you'll say yes to something you don't want to. It's about picking the better yes.

And Jesus was masterful at this. I want you to think about when He was tempted in the wilderness Himself. He goes out and is tempted by the devil. And the devil comes to Him and says, "Hey, see these rocks? Why don't You turn them into bread." And Jesus responds with the same words that we read in Deuteronomy, "Man should not live off of bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." He had a better yes locked and loaded.

When Jesus was tested in the Garden right before He goes to the cross He is praying to God. He is sweating. He is crying. He wants a better way. He wants a different way. He says, "God, if there is anything that can make it so that I don't have to go through with what is on the other side of this, let it be, let it happen. Remove me from the equation." But then He has a better yes. And this is our better yes, "But let My will but Yours be done." That's the better yes.

You and I, if we can remember the faithfulness of God not so quickly forget all that He has done. But if we can come to say, "I remember. I remember You're the One who saved me. I remember that You are the One who promised to be with me. And I remember my better yes."

We remember that God is faithful. He was with the Israelites in the wilderness. Did you know that? Look at this. 1 Corinthians, chapter 10. How long has He been faithful? Always:

"For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ."
1 Corinthians 10:4 (NLT)

As they were walking through the wilderness, they had a Rock. They had no water and they were complaining, grumbling once again, and God told Moses, "Hey, go take this stick and hit the rock." And water came gushing out. And that is what sustained them in the wilderness as they traveled.

The same thing is true today. Jesus would be struck on the cross for me and you. And what came pouring out was living water. What came pouring out was a way out. A way out for everyone here today. No matter what you have been a slave to, no matter what you have worshipped, no matter what has had control over your life there is a better exchange on the table for you and it is the Rock that is Christ.

God would leave heaven and come to earth, live the life that you and I could never live and He would go to a cross. He would defeat sin and death, doing what you and I could never do. He didn't fail. The test came. And He passed.

What He did was offered to us, what He and He alone earned. And that is something you can respond to today. Do not leave here without having that. To be able to place your hope and your desires in something that is worthy, that is Jesus and Jesus alone.

As we close today we're going to worship together at all of our campuses. But the reason we're going to worship is not just because it's about singing. It's about getting our hearts in the right posture, believing and remembering in the faithfulness of God. Remembering our better yes as we go from here and we live a life of worship.

So, at all of our campuses, would you stand to your feet as we close this out? I want to close with this. You know, living and growing old in the same city I grew up in, allows me to see things and to know things about the city. And the honest truth is, I'm becoming an old man. I know this because the things I say are the same things old men used to say around me.

I'll be driving down the road, my kids will be in the back seat and I'm like, "Hey, guys. You know what this used to be? This used to be Ritters ice cream. Now it's a car dealership." My kids could not care less. I'm like, "Hey, you know what that used to be? It used to be a Blockbuster." Don't ask me what that was. Okay? That's a different conversation. "You know what that used to be? That used to be a field. There was nothing there. And now look at how much is there."

What happened over the course of my life? Someone came, someone bought it out and started producing something different in that same space, in that same building. And church, Christian, I want you to hear this. Your heart may have been an idol factory one day, but now it is a temple for the very Spirit of God. You have been bought with a high price. You have been redeemed and repurposed. God has a plan for your life and He wants all of you.

So, what I want us to do right now is we are going to pray and I want to meet you right in that place because maybe you're thinking, "I still feel like an idol factory. I still feel like my heart is prone to wander." I want you to know God is not done with you yet. And I want you to know because He is faithful you can trust that the good work He started, He's going to see it to completion.

We're going to pray for it right now. So, close your eyes. Bow your head and join me in prayer.

Father, we thank You for today. God, we thank You for Your word. We thank You for Your faithfulness. God, we have settled too long for things that are unworthy of our heart's



affection. We have looked in all of the wrong places. But, God, there is a real ache, there is a real desire.

And God, we want to get to the root. God, cut the idolatry out of us. Pull it out from the root. Prune us. Shape us. Prepare us. God, help us to fix our eyes on You. Help us to remember Your faithfulness, Your goodness, and help us to live with a better yes.

God, help us to be reminded of not what we don't have or what You haven't done yet. But, God, I pray in this moment that we would remember Your faithfulness. That You have been chasing us down. You have been reaching us, You have been meeting us over and over and over again. And, God, now we are ready to respond. We worship You and You alone.

Jesus, we love You and it's in Your perfect and holy name we pray. And the church said: Amen.

