

## **SLIDE EASTER**

Easter this year will be 9am & 10:30am IN-PERSON & ONLINE

- Full Fathom Kids program at 9am.
- Childcare for 5 and under at 10:30am.
- REGISTRATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR EVERYONE!
- [fathomchurch.org/easter](http://fathomchurch.org/easter)

## **SLIDE GOOD FRIDAY**

Good Friday will be one service at 6:30pm IN-PERSON & ONLINE

- No childcare
- REGISTRATION ARE REQUIRED.
- [fathomchurch.org/easter](http://fathomchurch.org/easter)

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### **INTRODUCE**

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Samuel chapter 5. 1 Samuel 5. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to 1 Samuel 5.

## INTRODUCTION: FROZEN

I've told you about my daughter's obsession with the movie Frozen.

- And I genuinely like the movie Frozen.
- Well, maybe "like" is not the right word.
- I genuinely appreciate the quality of that film.

But listen, at one point Harper was watching that movie literally every day...

- and I swear, if I hear those songs one more time,
- I am going to lose my mind!
  - I don't want to build a snowman.
  - I don't want to ride my bike around the hall.

I mean, seriously, we would watch it every single day. Nothing else!

- And it got to the point where I was like,
  - "Harper...just let it go. Let it go!"
  - We gotta change this thing up."
- It's the same things repeated over and over and over again!

## INTRODUCTION: IDOLATRY

I feel a little like that about our subject today...

- but what we are going to discuss is really a theme
- of the whole Bible
- and it is so core and essential
- we have to return to it over and over.

And it's fitting that we talked about the seriousness of sin last week...

- Because today we come again to a theme
- we preach on often here
- and that is that
- the core sin of humanity
- is idolatry.

God created us to love and worship him above all things...

- and our sin consists of the fact
- that we have chosen a bunch of things
- to love and worship more than,
- and in the place of God.

So, I'm calling today's sermon **SLIDE IDLE IDOLS**.

- You see, when God comes into our lives
- he begins to challenge our idols,
- and renders them idle...pointless...worthless.
- Just like we're going to see in our text today.

This is why 1 Samuel 5 is for us. Because it shows us our IDLE IDOLS.

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### **EXPLAIN: CONTEXT**

Now, in order to understand chapter 5, we've gotta recap chapter 4.

- The Israelites go to war with the Philistines.
- And Israel just gets whipped.
- 4000 soldiers die.

Well, they regroup...

- but this time they grab the ark of the covenant,
- and they grabbed some priests,
- and they go back out to battle against the Philistines,
- thinking, *“Surely we’ll be victorious now! We’ve got the ark!”*

But what they’re doing is they’re treating the ark like an idol.

- They’re treating it like a religious talisman,
- or kinda like God’s lucky rabbit’s foot.

But we said, GOD WILL NOT BE MANIPULATED.

- There is no prayer you can pray...
- Or beads you can rub...
- Or sacrifice you can make...
- Or amount you can donate...
- That will get God to do your bidding!

And in that second battle

- the Philistines kill 30,000 Israelites.
- The priests of God are killed.
- And worst of all, the ark of the covenant is captured.

So, that’s where we’re at as we step into chapter 5.

## **1 SAMUEL 5:1-2**

[1] When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. [2] Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon.

## POINT 1

So, the Philistines have the ark...they have captured Israel's god.

- And they do what any pagan people
- would have done at that time.
- They put the ark in the temple of their god, Dagon,
- thinking, *"Our god is superior to this defeated god."*

You see, this was the mindset during that time:

- the Philistines didn't defeat Israel.
- The GOD of the Philistines defeated the GOD of Israel.
- Dagon defeated Yahweh.
- That's what they believed.

And as we talk about the topic of idolatry today, I was to start with this first point: **SLIDE IDOLS PROMISE SECURITY & JOY.**

- That's what Dagon did!
- He protected and prospered the Philistines.
- And frankly, it seems to have worked out for them!

Remember,

- they were terrified when the ark
- came into the Israelite camp,
- and they were worried about losing the battle
- to the God who had sent plagues on Egypt.

But now, they are victorious!

- Dagon has saved them!
- So, they bring the ark into the temple
- as a subservient god to the obviously more powerful Dagon.

Verse 3: **BLANK SLIDE**

## 1 SAMUEL 5:3-5

[3] And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. [4] But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. [5] This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

## JOKE: DAGON

So, the priests thought...

- *“that Dagon idol!*
- *Every time we come here*
  - *the Dagon idol*
  - *is laying on the Dagon floor*
  - *of the Dagon temple.*
- *Someone cut off the Dagon head*
  - *and the Dagon hands.*
- *And we’ve gotta get him back in the Dagon place!*

That’s a Dagon joke...alright?

## POINT 2

But, did you notice the details here?

- Dagon is first found face down,
  - as if prostrate in worship before God.
- And then the next day he's found with no head and no hands.
  - This was a common wartime practice
  - to collect the heads and hands
  - of fallen enemies
  - to demonstrate victory.

See, the reality here is that God doesn't play around with idols!

And my second point about idols is found here. Did you see in verse 3 what was said? **So they took Dagon and put him back in his place.**

### **SLIDE IDOLS NEED PROTECTION & SACRIFICE.**

They had to pick the broken pieces of their god off the floor.

Don't you see the irony here?

- The protector of the Philistines needed to be protected!
- Idols need to be protected from capture and sacrificed to.
- That's why many ancient cultures practices sacrifices...
  - to appease the gods...
  - or to feed the gods...
  - or to serve the gods.

**IDOLS NEED PROTECTION & SACRIFICE.**

But that is not true with our God.

- Our God is not like Dagon,
  - or any idol for that matter.
- He is not a helpless god
- needing to be cuddled,
- protected,
- and sustained by his worshipers.

The Apostle Paul says this in a sermon in Acts 17:

### **SLIDE ACTS 17:24–25**

[24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

### **BLANK SLIDE**

So, what happens? Well, let's finish our text:

### **1 SAMUEL 5:6-12**

[6] The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. [7] And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god." [8] So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel



be brought around to Gath.” So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there.

So, they’re like, *“Forget this! We gotta get this god out of here!”*

[9] But after they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them.

So, Gath is like, *“We don’t want that thing!”*

[10] So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, “They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people.”

And Ekron don’t even give it a chance to give them tumors... they like, *“Nope!”*

[11] They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.” For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. [12] The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

### POINT 3

Now, we'll get to what happens to the ark next week, but for the remainder of our time this morning, I want us to dig into the question of our idols.

And I'll make my last point:

#### **SLIDE IDOLS CANNOT FULFILL THEIR PROMISES.**

- For all the promises of security and joy
- that the Philistines thought they had from Dagon,
- in the end, Dagon couldn't keep those promises.

And that's the thing about idols...they are unable to cash the check.

#### **EXPLAIN: OUR IDOLATRY**

And that's our predicament as well.

Now, I don't think we are trusting in idols in the same way that these Philistines were, as in you probably don't have little wooden carvings of gods in your house right now.

If you do...stop it! Ok?

But Isaiah 44 says

- that a carpenter takes a piece of wood
- and with one half he makes into a god, his idol,
  - and falls down to worship it.
- And with the other half he burns it to warm himself
  - and cook his dinner.

## SLIDE ISAIAH 44:19

[19] No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, “Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?”

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He’s saying, “*What kind of dummy would worship an idol?*”

- I’ll tell you what kind of dummy.
- You’re looking at him.
- And you looked at him or her in the mirror this morning.
- Ours may not be carved out of wood...
- but every single one of us has the propensity to,
- as Romans 1 says, worship the creation over the creator.

## TRANSITION

So, what I’d like to do with the remainder of our time together is to go back through these three points, and work out some applications for us...

- because idolatry isn’t an ancient problem...
- a primitive problem...
- a problem for them back then,
- with their pre-modern sensibilities.
- But now we’re enlightened.
- Now we’re rationalists.
- Now we’re evolved.

So, I want to show you a few things we need to understand about idols in our lives that we can learn from this passage.

### **APPLICATION: POINT 1**

So, back to our first point: **SLIDE IDOLS PROMISE SECURITY & JOY.**

- This is what the Philistines believe of Dagon.
- With Dagon there was prosperity and security.
- Battles were won.
- With Dagon, they were guaranteed security and joy,
- but without Dagon...they could not have those things.

So, here's the question: **what is that in your life?**

- About what in your life do you think,
  - *“If I have that I’ll have security and I’ll have joy.*
  - *And if I don’t have that thing then it’s over for me.”*
    - Is it influence?
    - Is it success?
    - Is it physical beauty?
      - Or physical fitness?
    - Is it money?
    - Is it romance?
    - Is it fame and respect?
    - Is it having children?
    - Is it having children live close by?
    - Or is it something a little more tangible...

- like a home in the mountains...
- or a remodeled kitchen...
- or a solid retirement plan.

What is it that you'd say, *"If that's present, I'll have security and joy, but without that I'll never have security and joy."*

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### **EXPLAIN: GOOD THINGS**

And as I've said numerous times before: you notice, none of those things I said are bad things. Right?

- I didn't say pornography
- and black-tar heroin.

No. These are good things.

- Children.
- Marriage.
- Success at work.
- These are good things.

But they become idols when we find our security and joy in them.

- **Idolatry is when we take good things**
- **and make them god things**
- **and that's a really bad thing!**

What is that thing for you that promises security and joy?

- If you think,
  - *“I can’t live without that thing...”*
  - *if I lost that thing my life would be over.”*
- Well, you’ve probably turned that thing into an idol.

## DEVASTATED

You see, if you lose a good thing in your life,

- you’ll be sad...
- and sometimes you’ll even feel
- deep sorrow and lament!
- So, I’m not saying it wouldn’t be hard.

If you lose a good thing you’ll be sad...

but if you lose a god thing...you will be devastated.

And there’s a difference between sad and devastated.

I’m not saying you shouldn’t want these good things.

I’m saying,

- Would you be ok is you never get to that job promotion?
- Would you be ok if you never found that romantic relationship?
- Would you be ok if you never have your own children?
- Would you be ok if the wrong against you was never righted?
- Would you be ok if your health never improves?

Whatever you think will give you security and joy apart from God...

that’s probably your Dagon. That’s your idol.

## ILLUSTRATION: SUCCESS IDOL

I've told you before, but one of my idols that I am constantly battling against is the idol of success.

- My deepest fears and angst and worries
- are almost always tied
- to the loss of that idol in my life.
- The loss of perceived success.

A lot of pastors have this same struggle with the success idol.

I just have this fear

- that all of you are going to walk out on me
- because just one day you're gonna wake up and realize,
- *"Why am I listening to this moron*
- *with his same old stories week after week?"*

And you're just gonna leave,

- and I'll be in this room by myself...
- with Maryse...
- but she's got earbuds in listening to Matt Chandler
- because he's funnier than me...

And you see,

- I can even take a good thing like ministry,
- and make it a god thing.
- That's my Dagon.
- That's my idol.

## APPLICATION: POINT 2 - PROTECTION

Ok, back to point 2: **SLIDE IDOLS NEED PROTECTION & SACRIFICE.**

- Dagon needed to be picked back up and put back together.
- The very god who was supposed to protect them...
- needed protecting.

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What do you feel obsessive to protect in your life?

## EXAMPLE: KIDS

If kids are your idol, then you'll become clingy with your kids.

- If they're what promise joy and security
- then you've gotta protect them at all costs!

Now, we know that as parents we are to protect our kids!

- But some parents are helicopter parents, right?
- Just hovering and protecting and making sure everything's ok.

And then I just heard about a new phenomenon—lawn mower parents.

- These are the parents are just out in front of their kids
- trying to mow down any obstacle that might come before them
- so they're ok.

You saw this when the scandal of parents paying huge sums of money to bribe their kid's way into elite universities!

- They say they're protecting their kids,
- but in reality, they're protecting themselves.

**The ultimate point of parenting is not to hold on...but to let go.**



## **EXAMPLE: MONEY**

If money is your idol, then you're always going to be worried about whether you have enough or not.

- *"How can I protect my money?"*
- Of course you can't give or be generous!
- How could you give away that thing
- which is the most important to you.

You can't give it away.

- You have to protect it!
- For the future!
- You must protect it
- for fear of losing it.

## **APPLICATION: POINT 2 - SACRIFICE**

But idols don't only need protecting...they also demand sacrifice.

The whole ancient pagan system was built on sacrificing to Dagon to make sure Dagon was pleased.

And our idols today are just like that.

- They say to us,
  - *"Hey, if you want the security and joy I offer...*
  - *you've gotta sacrifice to me."*

## **EXAMPLE: SUCCESS**

I'll start with me on this one:

- I am generally a truthful person...
- but I have a propensity to start to lie
- when my idol of success is threatened.
  - I will exaggerate my successes
  - and diminish my failures
- to make myself look better.

And when I do that I am sacrificing my integrity to the idol of success.

## **EXAMPLE: ROMANCE**

When single people sometimes get desperate for romantic love,

- and start to date people who are a bit more questionable...
- or even sometimes not Christians at all...
  - they don't do so
  - because they really want a spouse
  - who doesn't know God at all...
  - and who will inevitably influence them
    - and even a potential future family
  - away from God.

No! But the idol of romance demands they sacrifice.

- And the thought of being alone...
- well, that's too much!
- *"So, if I've gotta circumvent God's way to get romance..."*
- *so be it!"*

## EXAMPLE: MONEY

Those Christians who won't obey God with their finances.

- You're here every week!
- You know the "first and best" line I say by heart!
- But you are still unwilling to give to God.

Listen, it's not just because you're stingy!

- It's that whatever your idol of comfort is wanting...
  - a new car...
  - a vacation...
  - a mountain property...
- that idol is demanding sacrifice.

You sacrifice for the idol, but here's the dirty little secret...

it will demand more and more and more!

## APPLICATION: POINT 3

Now, the final point:

**SLIDE** IDOLS CANNOT FULFILL THEIR PROMISES.

I hope you see this by now.

- But what happens with Dagon?
  - Well, when confronted with the one true God...
  - the Philistines realize
  - they've gotta get him out of Dagon's temple.
- Dagon isn't able to protect them.
- They're getting tumors.
- They're getting sick.

And one little line in verse 8 is really important: "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?"

- Now, that is a very important question.
- What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?

Let me ask you: what are you going to do with God?

- God will not be on the buffet line of deities in your life,
- and you just go to him when you need a little bit of God stuff.
- That's just not how he works.

Here's what we see in this passage:

- God is better than Dagon.
- Church, God is better than your idols!
- IDOLS CANNOT FULFIL THEIR PROMISES...
- BUT GOD CAN!

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## **CONCLUSION**

God is where security and joy are actually found!

- His love is more faithful, more tender, and more fulfilling than romance.
- His promises are more secure and more reliable than money.
- His presence is more life-sustaining than creature comforts.
- His future is more fulfilling than family.
- His attention and affections are better than the praise of people.

And God doesn't need your protection...he protects you!

- The Lord my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?
- The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?
- I don't need to obsess about romance.
- I don't need to obsess about money.
- I don't need to obsess about success.
- I trust you;
- I rest in you.
- God is my protector!

And finally, idols demand sacrifice...but our God offered his own sacrifice.

- Idols say,
  - *"If you don't sacrifice enough for me, I'll destroy you.*
  - *If you fail me, I'll make you miserable."*
- But the true God says,
  - *"You did fail me...and I saved you."*
- The true God says,
  - *"You did something that demanded a curse,*
  - *but I took the curse on myself."*

This is the God you should give your life to!

And Jesus says,

- *"If you want all the things you are seeking,*
- *you come to me.*
- *You return to me.*
- *Forsake your idols...*
- *repent...turn and run to me."*

Tim Keller says: *“Jesus is the only god whom, when you obtain him, will satisfy you, and when you fail him will forgive you.”*

- Have you returned to God as your god?
- You do it the first time, at your conversion...
- and then you keep returning for the rest of your life.

Oh church, these IDLE IDOLS...they are just that.

- Idle.
- Worthless.
- They will let you down.

But that question: **what shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?**

I'll ask that to you: what are you going to do with Jesus?

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

## RESOURCES USED:

- Davis, Dale Ralph. 1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart.
- David, Dale Ralph. *Smashing Your Images*.
- Keller, Tim. Counterfeit Gods.
- Keller, Tim. *The Lost Ark*.
- Martin, Joby. *The Lord Is One*.
- Tsumura, David Toshio. The First Book of Samuel.