

Chasing Your Satisfaction

Secret gods everywhere - yes, everywhere! You might find them under your pillow, in your garage or room. You might find them in your closet, bedroom, wallet, purse, briefcase, truck, at work near your television or in your kitchen. I do not mean gods made of wood that sit on the mantel of a fireplace or a golden Buddha on a table or in the public square. The Bible describes those gods as follows:

*The idols of the nations are but silver and gold,
The work of man's hands.
They have mouths, but they do not speak;
They have eyes, but they do not see;
They have ears, but they do not hear,
Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths.
Those who make them will be like them,
Yes, everyone who trusts in them. Psalm 135:15-18*

These idols cannot speak, hear, move or think. Such gods are obvious. So they are not secret gods at all. But there are secret gods. They are the non-obvious ones that we do not think about as gods. Yet they are present with us every day, occupying our thoughts, time and emotions.

The secret gods are the worst because they destroy both our spiritual lives and our physical life.

Some of us might think that a pastor who was caught kissing his secretary in a parking lot has a secret god. The senior pastor and elders of his church were stunned when this occurred. The church leaders did not know that the associate pastor and the secretary had an ongoing relationship, but their relationship was finally discovered. The associate pastor subsequently lost his position and his ordination

was revoked. What was his god?

Or, what about the youth pastor who lost his position due to sexual misconduct - adultery - with a female college student? Or, how about the man whose son and wife discovered that he was into pornography while working on the family computer one day? Or, how about the man who had an ongoing homosexual relationship working with a minor who was a member of the youth program that he was overseeing? These are only a small number of examples. These folks are not alone because there are many who are guilty of doing these things too!

Some folks might think these are examples of secret gods. While it is true that these are bad examples, these are not examples of secret gods. These examples are the result, the overt signs, or the external indicators of truly secret gods.

LOOKING INSIDE. Jesus said in Matthew 15:15-20 that what comes out of a man's mouth does not defile him but

what comes out of the heart. It is the heart where the truly secret gods exist and they defile a man. Colossians 3:5 tells us that the real gods are deep inside - our desires.

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Col. 3:5 (NASB)

And Ephesians 3:3 echoes the same truth,

For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Eph. 5:5 (ESV)



Stephen Charnock writes the following,

All sin is founded in a secret atheism . . . All the wicked inclinations in the heart . . . are sparks from this latent fire; the language of every one of these is, "I would be a Lord to myself, and would not have a God superior to me."¹

What's the message? There are secret gods within us that are rejecting the Lord of lords, the King of kings and the Victor of victors. Even though Exodus 20:3-4 warns us to not worship or honor any other gods before the true God - we do!

EXAMPLE OF CAIN. Cain is a classic example of a man who had a secret god inside. The scriptures tell us that both he and his brother made offerings to God. Able gave God a sacrifice from his flock, but apparently Cain ignored God's request for an animal sacrifice and decided to give God what he wanted to give. There are folks like that today who think God should appreciate whatever they want to give Him and ignore His standards. Genesis 4:3-7 reveals God was not pleased with such behavior. Cain became angry with his brother because God preferred Abel's sacrifice over his own. Genesis 4:6-7 reveals what happened next.

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." Gen. 4:6-7 (NASB)

What did God reveal was Cain's problem? Sin wanted to control him, but he had to master it. God revealed that Cain had an internal struggle. There was a war inside with his secret god.

EXAMPLE OF JUDAS. I Samuel 1 tells us that Elkanah had two wives: Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had given birth to sons and daughters, but Hannah was not able to give birth. She was barren. 1 Samuel 1:2-7a tells us that Peninnah was a rival to Hannah and Peninnah would provoke Hannah in order to irritate her. Peninnah had a secret god

deep inside and it motivated her to this type of behavior.

EXAMPLE OF JUDAS. Judas, one of Jesus's twelve disciples, is another example of idol worship from the inside. We know very little from the pages of scripture about Judas. John 6:71 says that he was the son of Simon Iscariot. John 12:4-6 reveals that Judas appeared to be concerned about the finances of Jesus' ministry. The disciples and others may have thought that Judas had good motives, but Jesus knew his heart was filled with greed. In fact, he would embezzle from the ministry's money bag.

But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. John 12:4-6 (NASB)

Later in John 13:2 we are told that Judas eventually decided to betray Jesus. Mark 14:10-11 and Matt. 26:15 reveal that he agreed to betray Jesus for money - thirty pieces of silver, the Old Testament price for a slave (Ex. 21:32). Yet, Jesus knew what was going to occur all along (John 13:19-30). What does this example reveal about Judas? First, Judas' secret god was greed. He had a pattern of greed. In fact, he was so greedy that he even stole from the ministry to which he belonged - he was the treasurer of the ministry. Greed was so much a pattern of his life that Satan entered into him and motivated him to action (Luke 22:3). Satan exploited Judas' idol worship of greed.

THE STOP SIGN. Do you remember Psalm 135:18? It said that those who make or have idols become like them. Many of us have an idol or idols that we have made and follow and if we do not flee them, we will become like them. Would you like to destroy your secret gods? There are two important steps you must take.

The first step is revealed in Philippians 4:11-12 when we are told,

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with

1. Charnock, Stephen. The Existence and Attributes of God." Baker Books. 1996. , Vol. 1, pp. 93-94.

humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. Phil. 4:11-12 (NASB)

Paul says that he has learned to be content with earthly things: his status or position, his money, his home, or whatever else. This is a choice one must make. To not be content is a sin because God is the one who gives us what we own. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus told us to seek first the kingdom of God - that is the priority - and then God would take care of our needs. To be content is a stop sign on our pursuit after things. Philippians 4:11-12 says stop pursuing your satisfaction and determine to be content with what you have. If you want something, then ask God for it, ask for guidance, and if God says no, then be content. That is the first step to destroying your secret gods. Say no to your desire for satisfaction. Philippians 4:11-12 says, "STOP chasing your satisfaction!"

PURSUE HOLINESS. That is the negative message. Philippians 4:11-12 says, "STOP." But we need something to fill the void. We need something positive to do, and Colossians 3:5 is the answer. Colossians 3:5 reveals the second important step we must take when it encourages us, in fact, commands us to put to death everything earthly inside - to put to death those secret idols or gods. How can we do that? Matthew 5:6 gives us our first clue. The passage reads as follows:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Matt. 5:6 (NASB)

This statement was made by Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount. How many folks were listening we do not know. Some have speculated that there might have been thousands listening to Jesus. The words that Jesus used for hunger and thirst are strong words having the idea of being extremely thirsty and hungry. The Greek word Jesus used for hungry was used to describe Jesus' hunger during His testing in the wilderness in Matthew 4:2. The Greek word that Jesus used for thirst was also used to describe His thirst when He hung

on the cross in John 19:28 just before He died. The third key word in this verse is "satisfied." The Greek word has the idea of "fatted cattle" or being "full-up" or "stuffed."

Therefore, when Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst . . ." He was talking about real hunger and real thirst and not the little pangs we have between meals. Jesus is talking about serious hunger, serious thirst or a serious longing for righteousness. In this verse, Jesus tells us how to become satisfied. He says that those who hunger and thirst after satisfaction are chasing the wrong goal, the wrong desire and it results in emptiness. The right goal is to not pursue satisfaction but holiness. 1 Peter 1:15-16 echoes this truth when we are told to be holy, even as God is holy. We are to be like Jesus.

DESTROYING THOSE SECRET GODS. How do we destroy those secret gods? First, we decide to stop chasing after satisfaction and second we long to become holy. That is the correct goal. When the goal is correct, we will want to submit to Christ. We will want to put others above ourselves. We will be humble, flee sexual sin, speak the truth, share Jesus with others, daily read the scriptures, pray for others, and on goes the list. True satisfaction is not found in chasing after satisfaction but in longing to be holy, like Jesus. Holiness should be more important than your satisfaction or happiness. When your heart attitude and longing is correct, then God will respond by giving you satisfaction. But if you decide to long after holiness so that you will be satisfied, then you will not be longing after holiness but satisfaction; you will never find it. You should long only after holiness because God might just allow unhappiness into your life in order to make you more holy. God's greatest desire for you is your holiness - not your immediate satisfaction.

GOD WANTS YOU TO BE HAPPY. Does that mean God does not want you to be happy or satisfied? Isaiah 52:7 says this,

How lovely on the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who announces peace
And brings good news of happiness,
Who announces salvation,

And says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Is. 52:7 (NASB)

This verse reveals that God wants us to help make others happy by spreading the good news about Jesus Christ. Did you get that? God wants us to help others become happy! Now look at Psalm 16:11.

You will make known to me the path of life;

In Your presence is fullness of joy;

In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Psa. 16:11 (NASB)

Here we discover that God promises us joy in heaven for eternity. Now that is tremendous news. In John 14:27 Jesus says that He gives His followers peace, and in John 15:11 He gives us joy. Finally, Galatians 5:22 reveals that joy is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit that He gives us.

CONCLUSION. Now do you think that God wants us to be miserable, satisfied or happy? The answer is obvious, isn't it? God desires our happiness and He has told us how to realize it. First, we must decide to be content with whatever we have and second hunger and thirst, long after, holiness and nothing more. Then leave what happens up to our God who wants to make us happy.