

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

“FROMTO Book of 1 Samuel”
Idol Gives Back? (1 Samuel 4-7)
Questions written by Mark Collins
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Small Group leaders, are there any members in your who's ready to step out into leadership? Maybe there's someone who wants to take a greater role within your group? Or could there be people willing to learn and implement leadership principles in their everyday lives. If this is the case we have an amazing opportunity for them. Encourage your members to attend our Foundations in Leadership training Saturday June 21st and June 28th from 9AM to 3PM, Childcare (with pre-registry), breakfast and lunch are provided. During these two Saturday seminars we'll be unpacking the principles of leadership, while interactively allowing you to try on some of the skills as we go. I promise that these seminars are not tired, clichéd and boring classroom lectures. You'll have fun, meet new people and maybe, just maybe you'll discover a greater calling and purpose for your life. All you have to do to register is email Danah Davis at danah.davis@therocksandiego.org to sign up. Lets us know if you need childcare and the ages of your children.

Small Group leaders, are you encouraging your group members to join the Rock Army? Your group can catch the vision of becoming a part of a movement that encourages people to become World-Class Christians. To join, check out the ARMY requirements at www.therocksandiego.org/army/

MINISTRY PRAYER REQUESTS

As "small groupies," you are the heart and soul of this ministry--who better than you to lift up the Small Group Ministry in prayer? So, it's up to you, you can spend time in your small group praying for these things (weekly or occasionally), or you can pray during the week on your own time. If you'd like to be added to our Pastor's Prayer Team, just let us know. Mark Collins, the Small Group Pastor, would love your prayers! We send out a monthly email of his personal and ministry prayer requests. Just contact Andy Rodgers at andy.rodgers@therocksandiego.org. May God work through your prayers mightily!

Reaching the Lost: Pray that all the small groups continue to develop relationships with those who are far from God, and invite them to their small groups.

Current Small Group Leaders/Small Groups: Pray that all of our Small Groups take time to follow up on all the new people trying to get into small groups.

Potential Small Group Leaders: Pray that our current leaders continue to give their ministry away and develop future leaders to reach their full potential in Jesus.

The Rock Body: Pray that the Rock Army grows deeper and deeper in accountability to one another.

MEMORY VERSE

"Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained."

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – IDOL GIVES BACK?

O.K. I've got a confession to make. I think I'm ready to come out of the closet so to speak. Alright here goes, "I'm a huge *American Idol* fan." Wow, confession is really good for the soul! I'm sensing that I'm not alone. Have you seen the statistics? Unlike most successful television programs, past and present, *American Idol* has maintained and even grown its audience numbers beyond its first few seasons. A growing number of television executives have begun to regard *American Idol* as a programming force unlike any seen before. Jeff Zucker, the new chief executive of NBC, said, "I think *Idol* is the most impactful show in the history of television." The numbers seem to back him up. The final show had 33.4 million viewers in the U.S. alone not counting those who tune in abroad. *American Idol* is broadcast to over 100 nations outside of the U.S.; including Canada, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates, where episodes are also aired live (that's amazing considering the differing time zones). As you have no doubt heard (unless you live in a cave somewhere), that this year's finale came down to a marquee match up between the two David's (Cook and Archuleta respectively).

After 75 million votes, David Cook was crowned *Idol's* heavyweight champion. While the finals were exciting, my favorite episode of the season happened on April 9th when *Idol Gave Back* 75 million dollars to hurting children around the world. That night was a stark reminder of the grace that God has shed on most of us and our responsibility to others who are barely struggling to survive. During the show, I kept hearing the phrase "Idol Gives Back" over and over again. So much so, that I believe that God really spoke to me that night. After the program, I remember being shaken over the fact that so many in the world are suffering, and asked God "Why?" Now I don't claim to completely understand the nature of human suffering but I'm sure that God answered me that night with one powerful phrase, "Idols Never Give Back." Across the globe myriads are serving capricious gods who only take and never give back. Millions upon millions serve out of fear, trying to appease a wrathful deity (idol) who demands a high payment just to allow his subjects to barely scratch out their own survival.

It seems that it's the very nature of human beings to worship something, or someone. In fact, the more tangible and visible the image is the better. Throughout the history of the Hebrew nation and even extending into the Church, God's children have struggled with idolatry. Modern Christians may not bow down and physically worship images as people did in the past, yet materialism and superstition are still rampant in the Church today. 1 Samuel 4-7 tells the story of a cosmic battle between two Gods: Dagon, the god of the Philistines and Yahweh, the true God of the universe. Initially, just like the recent fight on *American Idol*, the judges called it a knockout victory by one of the contestants. In the beginning the Philistine god seemed to win every battle. Yet conflicts are not decided by the initial battles, but by a long term commitment, fortitude and planning to do what ever it takes to win the entire war. From the very beginning, God has had the long term commitment (at great personal cost) and the plan to win the war fought for the human race. Along the way God has taught His people (and Dagon's for that matter) who's really the master of the universe.

Getting Started

What superstitions were popular when your grandparents were young? What superstitions do people believe in today?

Digging Deeper:

Read 1 Samuel 4:1-21.

1. Why did the Israelites bring the ark to the battle front? What's wrong with their thinking?
2. What do the Philistines know about the Lord (vv.7-9)? Where do you think they got their information?
3. Has there ever been a time in your life when you trusted in symbols or rituals instead of the reality to which they point? What was that like?
4. Read 1 Samuel 5:1-12. What message was God sending to both the Philistines and the Hebrews (He didn't rescue the Hebrews from the Philistines, and He didn't rescue the Philistine god from the ark)?
5. Read 1 Samuel 6:1-21. When in the last year have you felt like God was angry with you? What did you do about it? Did you try to appease Him by trying to offer your own guilt offering? Did that work? What does God's Word tell us to do when we feel that we have offended Him?
6. Have you ever put God to the test? What was that experience like? What does putting out a fleece say about your faith?
7. The Philistines learned the hard way not to treat the holy things of God with disrespect. Have you ever taken the holy things of God for granted, or handled them too loosely? What was the result?

Bringing it Home

A few years ago I had the wonderful opportunity of going to India for a short-term mission trip. While there, I had the privilege of staying with a local pastor and his wife who God is powerfully using for the gospel. Soon after I arrived I became brokenhearted over the number of idols in this wonderful but very different culture. Every where I looked there was a god. From dashboards of taxi cabs (who by the way really needed protection the way they drove), to the market and every private home we visited there was a god demanding a sacrifice. After one especially fruitful day of sharing our faith, the team met at our host's home for some deprogramming. It was my intention to ask what was up with all the idols, but the conversation never seemed to lend itself towards that question. Finally, the dialog turned to some of the differences between the West and India. I asked our host if she had ever been to the states. Her reply really shocked me when she said, "Yes but I never felt comfortable because of all the idols." Frankly I was a little dumbfounded and proceeded to press about her observation. She looked at me straight in the eyes and said, "Sure there's a lot of idols in India but we don't build great stadiums to worship our sports teams. Indians don't build grand shopping malls to bow at the feet of the god of materialism, or display the newest automobiles on every other street corner."

End this session by discussing what idols may have quietly crept into your lives. Think about the whole of life your time, talent, and treasure. Are there any idols that have taken over and are now demanding a sacrifice? Would your checkbook reveal that Yahweh is the true and only God of your life?