

Miscellaneous
Lay it Down
January 30, 2011
Text - Genesis 22:1-18

Last minute change of direction

**God wants and deserves to be on the throne of our hearts,
high above all else**

- **Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (ESV)**

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.

- **Matthew 22:36-38 (NIV)**

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.

- **Luke 14:25-26 (ESV)**

²⁵ Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

**Most of us know, if we're honest with ourselves, that God is
not on the throne**

- We know there are things in our lives, sometimes times lots of things, that we love more than God.
- These things are often one of the following: our health, our reputation, our attitudes, our loved ones, our comfort, our hopes and dreams, our careers, our past times, our money, our possessions, our hurts, our hates, or our addictions, but they could be anything.
- Biblically we could refer to these things as *idols*, in that to one degree or another they have taken the rightful place of God in our lives. They are God-replacements that we have set up, and bow down to, in hopes of receiving a blessing from them. They are things, other than God, that we look to for provision, contentment, joy, and meaning in life. In a very real sense, we worship them, in that we dedicate ourselves to them and

give them our undivided love and affection on a day to day basis.

- Chances are that most of you could write down your top three idols down for me right now. But if you're not sure, ask yourself these questions...
 - o What is your passion?
 - o What is the default setting of your mind? In other words, what is the thing your mind goes to most often when it can go wherever it wants?
 - o What is the thing you most fear to lose?
 - o What is the thing you can't live without?
- Note two things about these questions...
 - o No matter what you might say, if your answer to all of them isn't God, then you have something on the throne in your life other than Him.
 - o If your answer to those questions isn't God, then you are sinning against Him in a *very serious way*.

When God (who knows our hearts) sees that we've put something above Him, He tests us by calling us *lay it down on the altar*.

- This is exactly what He did with Abraham.
- Though the text doesn't say so, I believe that God knew that Isaac was beginning to compete with Him for the throne of Abraham's heart.
 - o The story of Isaac
- Therefore God gave Abraham the ultimate test by calling Him to lay Isaac, his one and only son, the child of the promise, down on the altar. *AMAZINGLY, Abraham passed the test.*
 - o **Genesis 22:1-3 (ESV)**
 - ¹After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." ²He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." ³*So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.*

o **Genesis 22:9-18 (ESV)**

⁹ When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son *and laid him on the altar*, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." ¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, *for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.*" ¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided." ¹⁵ And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶ and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, *because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,* ¹⁷ *I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.* And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, ¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, *because you have obeyed my voice.*"

Though we have no guarantee, sometimes when we lay down what God is calling us to lay down on the altar, He will give it back to us like He did with Isaac.

- When I first came to the Lord 13 years ago I knew there were all sorts of things in my life that I loved more than God.
 - But I also knew there was one that towered above the rest - GOLF
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- Started to play golf the summer after I graduated from high school and I absolutely fell in love with it (1993)
 - o Stats from 94-96

- If you would have asked me the questions we talked about earlier at that time, my answer to all of them would have all been the same...
 - What is your passion?
 - What is the default setting of your mind?
 - What is the thing you most fear to lose?
 - What is the thing you can't live without?
- I know it's sick, but it's true, golf sat alone on the throne of my heart completely dominated my life from the summer of 1993 on. I was totally enamored with it.
 - Qualifier: There were other idols (Basketball and Jess)
 - But in terms of where my mind and heart were *most of the time*, they were with golf

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- Thus, when I became a Christian in 1998 and found out that God wanted me to love Him more than I loved golf, *I was afraid*. I knew very early on in my walk that God was calling me to lay golf down on the altar, *and I didn't want to do it*.
 - I can remember trying to reason with God out on the golf course (career)
 - I can remember pleading with God as well (lightening)
 - But no matter how much I reasoned and pleaded, God would not relent. He was calling me to lay golf down, and I knew it.

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- And so, little by little, I yielded to what God was calling me to do
 - Early morning Bible reading
 - Give your first and best to God
 - Really hard at first but got it easier
 - The more I pursued God, the more I fell in love with Him, and the more I fell in love with Him, less I thought about golf and the easier it was to lay down. God was beginning to take the place of God in my life
 - Note: It wasn't that I loved golf less. I loved God more.
 - God not only pitched in to help by changing my heart and my affections, but He pitched in in other ways as well (lots of kids and a career change)

- I knew I was finally over the hump in 2005 when I threw out my golf tapes
- Though it had taken me 7 years, I'd finally laid golf all the way down on the altar.
 - I highly recommend the Abraham one night plan instead
 - But then again who knows what had led up to it

- Amazingly, once I finally laid it all the way down, God gave it back to me.
- Ex. This summer
- Played more golf this past summer than I have in a long time (maybe 20 nine holes ☺)
- I used it as an opportunity to minister to others, but I also used it as an opportunity to minister to myself.
- Though I was totally inconsistent and nowhere near as good as I had been, it didn't really bother me that much.
- I was able to leave golf at the golf course, which had always been my dream and my prayer ever since becoming a Christian.
- By the grace of God I was able to love it without allowing it back onto the throne of my heart
- Praise the Lord!

What is God calling you to lay down today? What is it in your life that is competing with God for the throne of your heart? What is it that is standing in the way of you giving God the complete and undivided love and affection He so deserves? What is your Isaac?

Whatever it may be, I cannot guarantee you that if you lay it down God will give it back to you as He did with Isaac for Abraham and with golf for me. But I can guarantee you this. The blessing you'll receive for being obedient to God, and moving Him one step closer to the throne of your heart, will be more than worth the sacrifice, no matter how painful it may be.

- I want to close with the story of Jesus and the rich young man to drive this point home.

- **Mark 10:17-30 (ESV)**

¹⁷ And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.' " ²⁰ And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." ²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. ²³ And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶ And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." ²⁸ *Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you."* ²⁹ *Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,* ³⁰ *who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.*

