

Misplaced Trust

Choosing the Gift Over the Giver

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Big Idea

- When we trust God's gifts more than God Himself, we lose His power, presence, and direction.

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1. Trusting Symbols Instead of God

- Text: 1 Samuel 4:1–11
- Israel trusted the Ark instead of God
- Symbols cannot replace God's presence
- Relationship > Religion

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¹ Now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines at Aphek.

² The Philistines deployed their forces to meet Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousands of them on the battlefield.

³ When the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, “Why did the Lord bring defeat on us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the Lord’s covenant from Shiloh, so that he may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies.”

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⁴ So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. And Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

⁵ When the ark of the Lord's covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook. ⁶ Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, "What's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?"

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When they learned that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp, ⁷ the Philistines were afraid. "A god has come into the camp," they said. "Oh no! Nothing like this has happened before. ⁸ We're doomed! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. ⁹ Be strong, Philistines! Be men, or you will be subject to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men, and fight!"

¹⁰ So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty-thousand-foot soldiers. ¹¹ The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

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- Israel was losing battles. Instead of seeking God, repenting, or listening to His voice, they said:
- “Let’s bring the ark... so that it may save us.”
- They trusted the symbol instead of the God of the symbol.

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Spiritual Insight

- The ark was SACRED, but it was never meant to replace the Holy One.
- Religious objects, traditions, or routines can become idols when we trust them more than God
- Do we trust the *form* of religion but lack the *fire* of relationship?
- When symbols replace surrenders, we lose spiritual power.

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2. Trusting Creation Instead of Creator

Text: Genesis 13

⁵ Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶ But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. ⁷ And quarreling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."

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¹⁰ Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)

¹¹ So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company:

¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom.

¹³ Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.

¹⁴ The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.

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¹⁶ I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷ Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.”

¹⁸ So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the Lord.

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- Abraham gave Lot the first choice. Lot lifted his eyes and saw:
- “The Jordan Valley... like the garden of the Lord.”
- Lot chose what looked good, not what God said was good.
- Creation is beautiful, but it is not God.
- Lot chose based on sight, not faith.
- He trusted the land’s potential more than the Lord’s promise.
- What looks good is not always beneficial.

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Reflection

- Are WE choosing by sight instead of by faith?
- Are WE trusting the “green valley” more than the God who owns the valley?
- Lot’s choice led him near Sodom.
Good-looking decisions can lead to spiritually dangerous places.

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3. Trusting Appearance Instead of God

Text: 1 Samuel 16

The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”

² But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”

The Lord said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’ ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”

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⁴ Samuel did what the Lord said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

⁵ Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

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⁶ When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord.”

⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

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Samuel saw Eliab and thought:

- “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before Him.”

But God corrected him:

- “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

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- Humans are drawn to charisma;
God is drawn to character.
- We trust what looks impressive—
talent, beauty, status, confidence.
- But God chooses what is often overlooked.
- Are WE trusting what looks strong,
or the One who is strong?
- God’s choice is always better than human
appearance.

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4. Trusting Numbers Instead of God

Examples: David (2 Samuel 24)

² So the king said to Joab and the army commanders with him, “Go throughout the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba and enroll the fighting men, so that I may know how many there are.”

³ But Joab replied to the king, “May the Lord your God multiply the troops a hundred times over, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king want to do such a thing?”

⁴ The king’s word, however, overruled Joab and the army commanders; so they left the presence of the king to enroll the fighting men of Israel.

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⁵ After crossing the Jordan, they camped near Aroer, south of the town in the gorge, and then went through Gad and on to Jazer. ⁶ They went to Gilead and the region of Tahtim Hodshi, and on to Dan Jaan and around toward Sidon. ⁷ Then they went toward the fortress of Tyre and all the towns of the Hivites and Canaanites. Finally, they went on to Beersheba in the Negev of Judah.

⁸ After they had gone through the entire land, they came back to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

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⁹ Joab reported the number of the fighting men to the king: In Israel there were eight hundred thousand able-bodied men who could handle a sword, and in Judah five hundred thousand.

¹⁰ David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the Lord, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, Lord, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing."

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- David trusted numbers not in God
- David trusted upon human strength.

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Application

- God is not impressed by numbers— He is moved by faith.
- Trust God over money, resume, or network
- God is sufficient
- His presence is enough
- God values faith, not size

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Illustration: George Müller

George Müller ran an orphanage in England in the 1800s. He never asked anyone for money—he prayed and trusted God alone.

- One morning, the children sat at the table with no food. Müller prayed:
- “Lord, we thank You for what You are going to give us to eat.”

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- Moments later, there was a knock at the door.
- It was the baker. He said, “God woke me up last night and told me to bake bread for your children.”
- Right after that, another knock.
- It was the milkman. His cart had broken down right in front of the orphanage. He said, “The milk will spoil. Can the children use it?”

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- God provided bread and milk—not through wealth, not through numbers, not through human strength, but through His power and perfect timing.
- Müller didn’t trust money—he trusted the Giver.
- He didn’t trust resources—he trusted the Source.
- And God showed up in a way no human could have planned.

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Conclusion

- Israel trusted the ark
- Lot trusted the land
- Samuel trusted appearance
- David trusted numbers
- God redirects us back to Himself despite misplaced trust. Why?
- Because we are His image bearer and his adopted children and saved for his eternal kingdom.
- He wants us to trust Him and experience His mighty hands moving over our lives.

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Final Call

- The gifts are good—but the Giver is greater.
- Let us Trust God above everything.

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Philippines 4:6-7

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.