

CITY ON A HILL

gods
at
war



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While there aren't many "graven images" in our world today, there are still countless gods viciously at war for the throne of your heart. This journal will help you identify and recognize misplaced worship in your own life, and point the way to victory.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

gods at war

6 **WEEK 1**
worship

40 **WEEK 2**
pleasure

70 **WEEK 3**
love

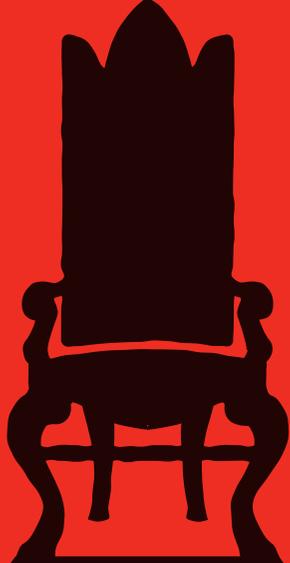
90 **WEEK 4**
money

112 **WEEK 5**
power

134 **WEEK 6**
self

158 **EPILOGUE**

WEEK 1: WORSHIP







DAY 1

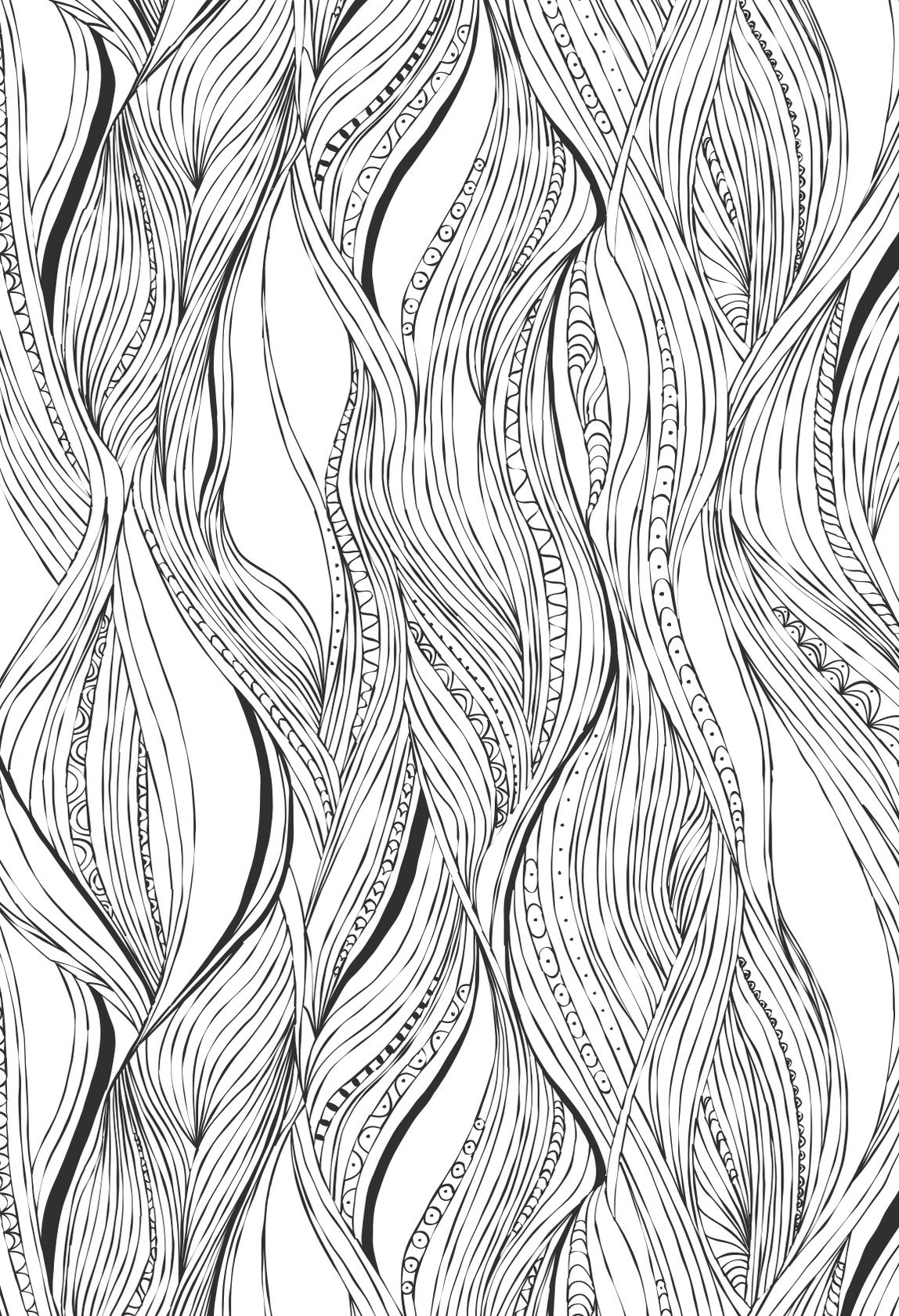
Today marks the start of our journey to find the throne of our heart and see who sits there.

We may be tempted to think this answer is obvious, especially if we grew up in the church. But when we really start to weigh it, the answer may be surprising. There can be — and often is — a gap between what we say we worship and what we functionally worship.

One of the most important tools for this journey is your willingness, and this is not to be counted lightly. Jonah, the Old Testament prophet, is a classic example of an unwilling instrument. Told to go to Ninevah, Jonah went to the opposite end of the known world

instead. Or at least he tried. He didn't have much success outrunning God. After a serious put-the-fear-of-God-in-you-type storm, Jonah wound up in Ninevah anyway, and he had to spend three days in the belly of a fish, too.

The same could be said of us. God has a plan to transform us into people who pursue him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. At the end of the day, our willingness to open our hearts and let God disabuse us of those things that would rival him as King could very well be the difference between repentance now or us needing a horrible storm — the ruining of friendships, of a marriage, of health, of finances. God may use these storms to wake us up to the rampant effects of sin, and when they finally blow over, through his grace, we'd repent after all.



Our being willing, though, doesn't guarantee that it will be easy to even find our idols, let alone unseat them. We may find that they are so deep and so enmeshed we actually thought they were part of us. It may give us a new take on Jesus' call to "take up our cross," "lose our life for His sake," or "sell all your possessions and give to the poor if you want to be saved."

Take a moment and write down something or a few things that make you nervous about beginning this study.

ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT YOU MIGHT HAVE TO "GIVE UP"?

ARE YOU NERVOUS ABOUT DREDGING UP YOUR PAST?

DO YOU FEAR THAT THE STUDY JUST WON'T WORK?



WHAT WORRIES YOU?

Another essential tool for our journey is the very word of God, our Bible. You may think of the Bible as a book to read and learn about God and this is true. But the Scriptures can also read us. They can help us to better understand our own hearts.

As you read in the weeks ahead, consistently ask,

**“IS THIS PASSAGE TRUE
OF ME? AM I LIVING UP
TO THIS PICTURE?”**

Be willing to accept the answer for the sake of being made new.

**TO FINISH TODAY’S JOURNAL TIME, LET’S PRACTICE THIS. TURN TO EPHE-
SIANS 2:1-10 AND READ. FEEL FREE TO JOT DOWN WORDS THAT STAND
OUT.**

*draw or
write here*

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THIS PASSAGE IS TRUE OF YOU? WHICH PARTS ESPECIALLY?



*"FOR WE ARE GOD'S
HANDIWORK, CREATED IN
CHRIST JESUS TO DO GOOD
WORKS, WHICH GOD PREPARED
IN ADVANCE FOR US TO DO."*

- EPHESIANS 2:10

Write out your reaction to this verse. ■

HOW DO YOU LOOK AT YOUR LIFE IN LIGHT OF THIS DECLARATION THAT YOU ARE A HANDCRAFTED WORK OF GOD BUILT FOR GOOD?



DAY 2



Today and tomorrow, you will take an inventory of your life —

how you spend your time and money, what occupies your thoughts, what you're working for, what you're working to prevent. None of these things are wrong in themselves. We all spend time and money, we all have thoughts and daydreams. Don't try to put down the "right" answer, just put down the truth.

For today, think about what makes you happy.



WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN
YOU GET "ME TIME"?



WHAT ARE YOUR SPLURGES
WHEN YOU HAVE A LITTLE
EXTRA MONEY?



WHO DO YOU MOST
DESIRE TO BE AROUND?



WHAT CAN TURN AROUND
A BAD DAY FOR YOU?



WHAT DO YOU WORK
HARDEST TO EARN?



WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN
THE MOST EXCITED?

If you are doing this in the morning, keep these questions on your mind through the day and revisit them in the evening. If you're doing this in the evening, sleep on them and revisit tomorrow. The extra time can help you come to your truest answers. ■



WHAT ARE YOUR CREATURE
COMFORTS (PLEASURES THAT
CAN DISSOLVE STRESS)?



WHAT WOULD MAKE YOUR
LIFE SEEM COMPLETE?



DAY 3



Yesterday you spent time reflecting on what makes you happy.

But today it's all about sadness. Sorrow, disappointment, even anger are not bad — in fact they are part of the full range of emotions that God has given to you, something he did on purpose. So there are no wrong answers here, and no right answers either. There is just the truth, and this is our place to tell the truth.



WHAT KEEPS YOU
AWAKE AT NIGHT?



WHAT ARE THE ISSUES IN YOUR
RECURRING ARGUMENTS WITH
SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU?



WHO IS THE ONE PERSON
YOU CANNOT STAND BEING
IN THE SAME ROOM WITH?



WHAT IS THE ONE THING
YOU CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT?
WHAT WOULD BE THE MOST
DEVASTATING THING TO LOSE?



WHAT DO YOU WORK
HARDEST TO AVOID
OR PREVENT?



WHAT IS THE MOST
UNFAIR THING YOU
HAVE ENDURED LATELY?

Try to look back over these answers after some time has passed and write down anything extra that comes to mind. ■



WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU HAVE
BEEN PURSUING FOR A WHILE
THAT HASN'T HAPPENED YET?



WHEN HAS YOUR HEART
BEEN MOST BROKEN?



DAY 4

The past two days were about worship, about starting to form an idea of what things we might be building our lives around.

This isn't a "gotcha" moment, though. Just because something gives you pleasure or makes you hurt doesn't automatically mean it's become an object of worship. But as we will see today, what makes us feel good and what makes us feel bad can be used against us.

In order to really understand idolatry — worship in the wrong direction — we must go back to the start, to the Garden of Eden.

OPEN YOUR BIBLE TO GENESIS 3 AND READ VERSES 1-10, THE STORY OF EVE'S TEMPTATION.

Did the serpent offer Eve a divine feast? A heavenly career? God-like wealth? No, no and no. He said that she herself would be like God. Which you have to admit was a pretty clever move. If you're the god, all the other stuff comes with it, right? But that's the trick.

Our enemy's chief deception is to center our concern on looking after our own life, focus our efforts on making life as good as we want it to be, as happy, as comfortable, as influential, as connected. So as we seek out the idol or idols in our heart, we should expect to find them closely entwined with our feelings of happiness, comfort and connection.

On the other hand, we may find our idols are in the exact opposite direction, with our hurts and fears. Idols may be the things we run to catch or the things we run away from.

Surely pursuing comfort and happiness while fleeing pain and sorrow is the mode of life that comes most naturally to us.

WHAT DO YOU THINK LIES AT THE HEART OF OUR NATURAL INCLINATION TO SEEK GOOD FEELINGS AND AVOID BAD FEELINGS?



We have each been completely formed to understand life this way, but it revolves entirely around our feelings. We must be transformed. Indeed, Jesus has other, better ideas for us.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES, READ THE WORDS OF JESUS AND WRITE DOWN ANYTHING THAT STANDS OUT TO YOU.

SO DO NOT WORRY,

saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

- MATTHEW 6:31-33

GET CREATIVE ON THESE PAGES!

WRITE, DRAW, COLOR, HIGHLIGHT OR ANYTHING ELSE

THEN HE SAID TO THEM ALL:

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?”

- LUKE 6:23-25

GET CREATIVE ON THESE PAGES!

WRITE, DRAW, COLOR, HIGHLIGHT OR ANYTHING ELSE

These are some of Jesus' most challenging words to us. They strike at the heart of our deepest temptations. The serpent invited Eve to guard her life, to seek first her kingdom and make preserving her life the main priority. Jesus invites us to surrender our lives, to seek to know God and follow him. And why? Because our soul is worth more on balance than the entire world. That's truly some amazing math.

Jesus' use of the phrase "take up his cross and follow me" is where we will end today. The cross was an instrument of death. It had no other use. You may have heard the phrase "die to yourself," and sure enough, that's what Jesus is saying.

So today, go back through your inventory of pleasures, hopes, fears and sorrows from the past two days. Take each answer and ask it these questions. Journal your thoughts:

WHAT IF GOD ASKED ME TO GIVE THIS UP?

WHAT IF GOD ASKED ME TO ENDURE THIS?

YOU
WILL
NOT
DIE





DAY 5

There are two main things that derail our worship of God.

One fear and one lie that undergird our every idol and our every sin. And here they are:

THE FEAR:

GOD IS NOT GOOD.

THE LIE:

GOD IS ESCAPABLE.

The fear works in our lives like this. If God isn't good, then we can't trust him to lead us to a good life, so we must take it upon ourselves to get a good life.

The lie works like this. If God is escapable, then we can do what we think best, and he'll either not catch us or not care. Either way we can pretty much do as we see fit.

WHICH OF THESE RINGS TRUE TO YOU?

A LOT OF WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT GOD IS INHERITED. WHAT DID YOU GROW UP BELIEVING ABOUT GOD?

IF YOU DIDN'T GROW UP HEARING ABOUT GOD, HOW MIGHT THAT HAVE STILL SHAPED YOUR DEEPEST IMPRESSIONS OF HIM?

Let's end today reflecting on God's own words to counter both the fear and the lie.

READ LUKE 11:11-13.

Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

Not everyone had a good father growing up. Some fathers leave, some are abusive, some pass away before their children know them. And some do their best. But no matter what kind of father you had or didn't have, God surpasses him in the ability to love and do good for you.

NOW READ JOHN 4:7-29.

It's very simple. God knows your deepest thoughts, desires, and sins. Are there things you wish he didn't know?

When you put these passages together, you get a picture of a God who is there. You haven't hidden anything from him. But that's only half the picture. God is also answering the deepest longings of your heart like a good father answering his child's cry for bread. And God is offering you his Holy Spirit, literally his very self. Friend, there is every reason to trust this God, to seek him out. ■

COMPOSE A SHORT PRAYER HERE ASKING GOD TO HELP YOU TO TRUST HIM AND STOP TRYING TO HIDE AS YOU CONTINUE ON THROUGH THIS JOURNAL.



DAY 6

It's already been quite a week.

Today we are going to look away from the ways our worship may be messed up and in need of grace and repair. Instead we're going to look forward and imagine a life that truly worships God above all else.

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

– *PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13*



People often use this verse to psyche themselves up before doing something difficult. But that's not what Paul meant by it at all. It is completely tied to the verse before. The reason Paul can be content whether well-fed or hungry is because Christ strengthens him for either and both. His contentment is already found in Jesus before his circumstances have even begun, before they have had time to go well or poorly.

Earlier in the week you considered losing what you treasure most and enduring what you most fear.

DO YOU KNOW ANYONE OR HAVE YOU HEARD OF ANYONE WHO HAS ENDURED THE UNENDURABLE AND YET HAS SOMEHOW KEPT OR EVEN DEEPENED THEIR FAITH? JOT DOWN THEIR STORY HERE.

IF YOU COULD ASK THEM HOW THEY WERE ABLE TO CARRY ON, WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY WOULD SAY?

A few days ago, you read Jesus' invitation in Matthew 6:33 to "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be added to you." A closing thought to carry with you today: Perhaps Jesus didn't mean that you'd get your every desire if you just seek God. Perhaps what he meant is that if you truly seek God, your appetite for the things you desire would simply fade in comparison until you indeed realized that in God you have everything already. ■



*SEEK FIRST
HIS KINGDOM*



DAY 7

Even God rested, and so each week of this journal we will take a Sabbath.

Even if you cannot take an entire day of rest, today do something that you find relaxing. Take a nap. Watch a movie. Hike in the woods. Tend your garden. Sew. Read. Set aside the time and do not be ashamed.

God designed you to rest, so there's no use acting like you don't need it. Besides, he's literally holding the whole world together, so everything will still be here when you get back.

Do something that rejuvenates you today. Before you begin, say a short prayer asking that God helps you rest. Something like this:

“GOD, YOU HAVE GIVEN ME LIMITS. PLEASE HELP ME TO EMBRACE THIS TIME TO ENJOY YOUR GOOD GIFT OF REST WITHOUT GUILT OR ‘I SHOULD BE DOING ...’”

Later, perhaps while you prepare for bed, think back on your time of rest and thank God for it. Think of specific feelings or thoughts that you had. Thank God for meeting the needs of your body and mind with rest. ■

COME TO ME



REST
for your
SOULS

MATTHEW 11:29

I'LL GIVE YOU