

## **Into the Light “Discipling Together” Deuteronomy 5:8-10**

Good Morning everyone, I hope you're all doing well! Just in case you don't know, I am Kent Tollakson and I oversee the youth and small group's ministries here at East Lincoln. My wife and I serve also through Cornerstone Counseling with a desire to help marriages. It's good to be here with all of you this morning and with those of you that may be listening online.

Please turn to Duet 5:8-10. I have worked on my message with the desire that it adds into Eric's sermon series of the 10 commandments and isn't a random topic plopped in the midst of them.

Last week – Eric talked about idols so let's read the 3 verses from last week again, so they can set the stage for today's message as well. (Let's read Duet. 5:8-10)

My attempt to add into Eric's series will be to address the following:

1. Idols can be more of a subtle slide for Christians.
2. Provide examples – both good and bad.
3. Remind us that we are in this together.
4. This is really hard for everyone without humbleness.

Example of Subtle Slide into Idolatry.

- I don't know of anyone who INTENTIONALLY worships a carved idol and proclaims a HATE of God.
- Idols don't have to be these carved items for Christians!
- I want to share a brief biography about a young man
- He is a good example of ideas and ideals creating an idol that led him astray.
- My definition of an idol this morning – is ANYTHING moving into first place instead of God.
- Why this definition – because Jesus teaches us the most important commandment is to Love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our mind all our soul and all our strength (Mk12:30). Of course God is #1 if we do that.
- Remember the second most important commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mk12:31) – love others, is next! Not yourself!

- Loving yourself comes in easily as #1 or #2 for all of us...it should be #3.
- This is the 2nd time I have listened to this biography about a young man named Chris McCandless.
- His life has been documented in this written biography<sup>i</sup> and a movie<sup>ii</sup> – both called – “Into The Wild”
- To live in the wild, one carries all they need – in a Backpack
- (Put it On) – a visual to help think about ALL you have to live – All your stuff and ALL your ideas & Ideals – All your stuff AND.... ALL your heart, mind, soul and Strength

(Take it off) I’m going to set this to the side while I talk but remember this backpack – it represents all of our stuff and knowledge.

For me, Chris McCandless provides a tragic tale of miss applied knowledge. Chris was an extremely smart kid. His dad worked for NASA, his mom, a secretary for Hughes aircraft. Later in life they ran a consulting business within his field of his expertise together, they are smart people who passed education onto their children. Chris had a sister Carine who he was very fond of and close too.

The scripture for today referred to the iniquity of the father would be visited on the children – and I see this as the iniquity of serving a false idol. We know that we don’t have to pay for the sins of our parents – nor do the parents have to pay for the sins of their children – as our God clarifies this for us in Duet24:16 and Ezekiel 18:19-20....

- BUT
- Blatant idol worship and hatred of God given as teaching to children will affect several generations! (that’s what its saying...)
- We don’t struggle with this level of idolatry – we struggle with a more sneaky and subtle way idols leak and seep into our lives.
- Solution!
  - Teach your children that God is the only thing to worship!
  - And, as you struggle, display the power of God by showing humbleness – admitting weakness and failure and asking for forgiveness!

Doing so....leads out of the darkness and into the light as Eric referred too last week.

This guidance was missing in the life of Chris McCandless, as far as his biography states. His father was a strict and demanding man without humbleness, confession and lacked compassion. His father placed an idol of living life according to his own ideas before his children. This began a rebellion within Chris and I think it's important to point out that Chris did know of God. We as Christians can glean a deeper battle for ourselves here. A quick example is that while in high school he encouraged his fellow cross country teammates to "run against the forces of spiritual darkness....and...all the evil in the world, all the hatred."<sup>iii</sup> This was not the first or last spiritual reference Chris made. It's a weak reference to our God, but wait for his dying words! Upon graduating H.S. in Virginia Chris traveled out to Southern California to reconnect with relatives and friends. It is here he learned that he had 6 half siblings because his father had been married to another woman first. He had led a secretive double life of polygamy before being found out by his wives and then divorcing his first wife. He kept this first wife and his six 6 children a secret from Chris and his sister. This is where I see Chris's father providing a damaging idol of ideals. He didn't show his sin, he kept secrets, all while proclaiming honesty and devotion as valuable. He created an idol of self-righteousness and deceit.

This deeply enraged Chris, but like his father, he kept things secret. The sin of the father was visited upon the son. Chris went off to college, performed extremely well and upon graduation in 1990 he gave 24,000 of his savings (all of it) to a charity and secretly 'divorced' his parents. He did so by disappearing. His parents and even his sister did not know where he went or what he was up to, he just vanished. He wandered and worked, going by the name of Alex instead of Chris.

- He created an idealism for life - in living off the land.
- Free from man "created" rules.
- Nature was the purest form of "rule" in his mind. The black and white of life and death – survival of the fittest.
  - Instead of the bible – he read A LOT: Walt Wittman, Theroux, Jack London, Louie Lamoure.
- His ultimate goal was to go off into Alaska and live completely off the land – free.

He got his wish. In 1992, leaving behind many people he had impressed with his intelligence and become friends with, he walked off into the wilds of Alaska – writing in his journal “I now go – into the wild”.

He died out there, he died alone, living free, he got caught on the other side of a river that he crossed over when ice, but it was too swollen, cold and swift to cross back over when he wanted to. As he struggled with hunger he ended up eating the seed pods of a plant called wild potato, the large root edible, the seed pods not so much. As he ate the root he also ate the seeds. No book labeled these seeds as poison, but after his death, his journal told about his diet and struggle, the seeds were examined and found to be toxic.

As I mentioned earlier, it was not uncommon for Chris McCandless to make mention of God. He made several references to God's great creation and God's design in his journal. His last words written were – “I have lived a happy life and I thank the Lord, goodbye and may God bless all.”

I find this so tragic, such a waste of a bright mind and life.

- He shows us that we can know of God,
- Yet live life far from what God desires.

And I'm not talking about salvation here, I have no idea if Chris McCandless was saved or not – that is up to God. But I do know he lived his life in a way that God did not desire.

You might be thinking I'm being harsh on Chris for saying this. But as a Christian I can't see it in any other way.

We need to allow God to Lead, and I have an example.

My wife Karalee has been blessed to get to know a husband and wife through kinship. They were from Alaska, they were living out in the wild – away from others. They didn't want contact with other people. But God saved them, rare contact with a Christian who shared the gospel awakened faith within him, which awakened faith within her. They came to realize they could no longer live out in the wild while reading God's word. They couldn't continue in living such a secluded life! They had to move, to go where they didn't really want to go, which

was to live by other people. Why? Because of basic biblical truths, here are a few; 1. Go therefore and make disciples (Matt28:19)! You can't do that out in the bush. 2. To be part of the body of Christ (1Cor12:12-14) – you can't be a part of a whole body by yourself, and 3. (Turn to Heb 10:24-25 with me, read)

These verses emphasis a great truth for today.... it says.....Let us consider how to stir each other, motivate each other, or spur each other into to Love and Good Works (Heb10:24) and how can we do this alone – we can't, so we should not neglect to gather together (Heb10:25), so that the stirring and spurring and motivating can happen!

Chris saw God, Chris even acknowledged God in his journal. He ended up living a life of his own making –

- creating an idolized way of living that may have been happy for him,
- but it didn't allow for the real work of teaching, training, sharpening, correcting, laughing, crying, making and giving that the Christian life commands.

We are all susceptible to this, to proclaim God, to proclaim Christ, to say He is our Savior while placing too much importance on our stuff or ideas.....letting the stuff or ideas become #1 and God getting pushed back to #2, at best.

This is the subtle way I see idols slide into our lives, into Christians lives. We know God, we proclaim Christ as savior, but while doing so we allow ourselves, or other people, noble causes, hobbies, things AND Ideas AND Ideals....to slide into first place while we keep God attached.

I know I have many ways I put things in front of God – fishing is a real easy example from my own life. I can easily spend more of my time, energy and resources on learning more, buying more, and practicing fishing more than following God. And I will be acknowledging God all along....making it easier to lose track of the reality that fishing has moved into being #1 – the idol, and God has been pushed into second place.

It's like wearing this backpack wrong. (Put the backpack on wrong)

As we live and proclaim Jesus to be Lord but allow the things of our lives to actually be first instead of God, the people around us just notice the stuff of our lives – the Ideas and Ideals we have.... instead of our love for Jesus.

How do we get this backpack moved into the right position?

We don't do it by ourselves very well!

By ourselves, we get caught up in our own idealized view

...and it works well if we are humble and allow others to point out our rough edges so we become, more, smooth. Remember good old Forest Clark saying we need to be like rocks in a rock tumbler TOGETHER!

Together we help each other, together we can get our backpacks on MORE correctly...more in line with His way (move the backpack around to be right) –

- So He – *unseen as He is* – is first
- We - as His servant - are loving others, second,
- and the stuff we have along with our ideas are ....used....

(Take it off)

This is what Heb10:24-25 is getting at – motivate each other (correct) to do go do work, by interacting with each other! This is what the book of Galatians deals with – it tells us to submit to the Spirit of God and live out Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control so that we will gently lead each other out of sin.

This gentle effort should be carried out by bearing with each other's strengths and weaknesses– which is to fulfill the law of Christ! (Gal6:2)

We do follow laws – the laws of love – as Christ loved us. – To love a life of Love as Christ loved us and LAID HIMSELF DOWN FOR US as a fragrant sacrifice unto God. (Eph5:1-2).

And being found in human form, Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil2:8)

This is really hard without humbleness.

Are you involved with East Lincoln in ways that get you into contact with each other more than just listening and learning?

Listening and learning are necessary – but only the raw material. We need to use Gods desires to share love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (5:22) so that we apply that in.... humbleness.

“a broken and contrite heart, God will not despise” (Ps 51:17), “blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt5:3) and “blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matt5:5).

Those that think they are pretty good are nothing (Gal6:3)

Because if they use their own boastfulness (flesh) as material – then they will only produce corruption and death (Gal6:8)

So let’s not grow weary of doing good for each other – especially our family of faith (Gal6:10).

And weary we will get at times.

We are all stubborn and prideful at times – please get involved in this church in a way that gets you into bible study with others. Small group, children’s church, discovery land, youth ministry, even committees and teams (worship, prayer, evangelism, missions, care, deacons, etc...etc...). Lots of ways to be involved....

But – leave your pride at the door as much as you can – practice admitting your wrong and can grow more....you do that – and things will go from being out of line to in line....at least more so. And remember that you will continually swing things back into being wrong more often that you will care to admit yourself.

All the more reason we need to KEEP GATHERING....repetitive correction! Don’t be discouraged if you are recognizing that you need to correct something that you have been trying to correct for a long time or that you thought you had beaten a long time ago!

Recognizing your sin personally or through someone pointing it out to you is a gentle way God is loving you – He reveals needed correction to those He loves (Heb12:5-6).

Do it all in love – as a display of the greatest love that has ever been given to you...the love of Jesus Christ through His payment for ALL you sin. But isn't it motivating to soak in the reality that Jesus didn't stop with the mercy of paying for all your corruption. He also displayed the power of God to raise Him from death to life to show His love, overflowing, onto us. We don't just get washed clean – we are also given more – resurrection into life with God Himself through His son! We need to remember the Gospel because...as Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "The devil doesn't fill us with hatred for God, but with forgetfulness of God."

Let's Pray.

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<sup>i</sup> Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild*, Villard 1996.

<sup>ii</sup> Sean Penn, (2007), *Into The Wild*, Motion Picture, Paramount Pictures, USA

<sup>iii</sup> [Krakauer, Jon](#) (January 1993). "[Death of an Innocent: How Christopher McCandless Lost His Way in the Wilds](#)" (PDF). [Outside](#). Originally retrieved April 4, 2008., used here on July 16, 2019.