



Let's Go | *Watch what you worship while you wait* | Chad Bruegman | 6.4.17

LG Weekly

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

As you look back on the past few months in your Life Group, what memory or conversation stands out to you and why?

OR

What summer vacation or experience stands out to you from your childhood? Share these stories with the group!

SHARE

In this series, we are going to be challenged.

Throughout scripture, God continually says, "Let's go." From Abraham to Moses and Gideon ... to Mary, Joseph, the disciples, and the apostle Paul; all had moments of God asking them to trust him. "Going" is not always a destination, but it does take obedience and faith. For some of us, *let's go* can mean it is time to stay right where you are and dig in. For others, *let's go* means drop what you are doing, turn the other direction, and go where Jesus is leading you. God truly speaks to us through his word, prayer, and through the Holy Spirit who guides and counsels.

God can do anything you know --- far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest

dreams! He does it not by pushing us around, but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Ephesians 3:20

It is such a beautiful paraphrase in The Message translation: “He does it not by pushing us around, but by working within us.” God is at work inside each of us who have a relationship with Jesus. When we take a moment to grasp that the Holy Spirit is within us and wants to guide our lives, a whole new world opens up to us. So let’s chase down the plans God has for us, the dreams that he has given us, and the life he has in store for us to live. It is God who calls us to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. We get our identity from him alone. It comes from no one and nothing else. When God whispers *let’s go*, we can trust him completely.

Ironically, when we first hear God’s invitation, “let’s go,” it doesn’t always mean that the “going” will happen right away. Rather than being called immediately into seasons of action, we find ourselves first called into seasons of waiting. And like the Israelites in Exodus 20, we are “notoriously bad at dealing with delays.” This week, Chad picks up with his second point of how to wait well and throws us a proverb-like warning, “watch what you worship while you wait.”

Let’s read Exodus 32:1-6

In this infamous story of idolatry, the people of Israel become impatient with how long their leader, Moses, is up on the mountain. In the 40 days that Moses is on Mt. Sinai with the Lord, the Israelites manage to forget everything the Lord has done to redeem them out of slavery. They forget the sacrifices they offered unto God, the promise they made to be obedient (Ex. 24:7), the Lord’s aid in the battle with Amalek (Ex. 17:8), and how the Lord provided water and manna in the desert (Ex. 16). And they forget the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 14)! In the absence of their leader and the alleged waiting on the Lord, they get tired of waiting. They justify the need for a distraction and fashion their own object of worship.

What emotions or thoughts does this story evoke for you? How do the actions of the Israelites and Aaron make you feel?

Doesn’t it seem unfathomable that the Israelites would forget everything the Lord had done and fashion their own idol to worship...just because they were tired of waiting? Yet because their sin of idolatry is so blatantly obvious, it seems far from the temptations of idolatry we face today.

We are a culture of instant gratification. Nobody *likes* to wait. We love microwaves, Uber, fast passes, call-ahead seating, and Amazon Prime. Waiting, our culture would tell us, is to be avoided; waiting is time wasted.

Yet waiting still happens. And in those moments or seasons of waiting, we are easily distractible. We cope with the delay, the unknown, the pain, or whatever it is that launched us into waiting, by filling our time and our lives with distractions.

Think of daily instances where you find yourself waiting (i.e., stoplights, grocery or school pick-up lines, etc.). How do you spend your time during these moments?

Can you recall a season of waiting (i.e., waiting on a job, a pregnancy, a diagnosis, etc.) in your own life? What do you remember believing or thinking about God during that time?

G R O W

“Sometimes,” Chad says, “it’s easier to be distracted than delivered.” And when we cope with our seasons of waiting by filling our hearts and minds with distractions, we open the door for idolatry.

Though idol worship in many parts of the world still exists the way we see it in Exodus 32; idolatry for us is much more subtle. Idolatry for us is justified. We take good desires or God-given gifts and make them the absolute center of our lives. Those around us applaud our sacrifices to our idols so we continue to justify our idolatry as a way of life. Our idols become our objects of desire—our objects of worship.

Let’s read Ezekiel 14:1-6

Like the men in Ezekiel, we have set up idols in our hearts. Tim Keller describes modern day idolatry in his book *Counterfeit Gods*,

What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.

A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life

would feel hardly worth living. An idol has such a controlling position in your heart that you can spend most of your passion and energy, your emotional and financial resources on it without a second thought. It can be family and children, or career and making money, or achievement and critical acclaim, or saving “face” and social standing. It can be a romantic relationship, peer approval, competence and skill, secure and comfortable circumstances, your beauty or your brains, a great political or social cause, your morality and virtue, or even success in the Christian ministry. When your meaning in life is to fix someone else’s life, we may call it “co-dependency” but it is really idolatry. An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, “If I have that, then I’ll feel my life has meaning, then I’ll know I have value, then I’ll feel significant and secure.” There are many ways to describe that kind of relationship to something, but perhaps the best one is *worship*.

Which of the idols listed above do you find the most convicting and why?

In *Counterfeit Gods*, Tim Keller gives four questions to ask to identify idols in your life. Which of these four questions is the most telling for you?

- 1. What do you habitually think about when nothing else occupies your mind?**
- 2. Where do you spend your money?**
- 3. Although you likely profess faith in God, do you functionally live as if something else determines salvation?**
- 4. Look at your most uncontrollable emotions (guilt, fear, anger, etc.) and discern if those emotions are a result of something in your life being threatened or operating as if something is a necessity?**

M O V E

In a world where good things and God-given desires masquerade as the end all or be all, how do we even begin to refocus our worship? We have to abandon idolatry.

Ezekiel 14:3 describes idolatrous elders, but their condition extends to us today: “the people have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces.” We worship idols in our hearts as more important than God, and we don’t see the Lord’s faithfulness in seasons of waiting because we have stumbling blocks in front of our eyes. In the wake of everything the Lord has done for us, our idolatry is just

as shocking as the Israelites building a golden calf.

But hope is not lost. In the midst of waiting, we move toward a position of hope. Though idols disappoint; hope in the Lord never will. God promises to “recapture the hearts of the people,” and urges us repent (Ez. 14:5-6). In repenting, we turn from our idols, our coping mechanisms and our distractions and reorient our worship towards the Creator of everything.

Turning from our idols is more than just admitting we have one or willing ourselves to live differently. It is through worship that the Lord ultimately replaces the idols of our hearts and reorients our desire. Keller writes “Jesus must become more and more beautiful to your imagination, more attractive to your heart, than your idol. That is what will replace your counterfeit gods. If you uproot the idol and fail to plant the love of Christ in its place, the idol will grow back.”

What do you think about the idea that Jesus himself will be more attractive than your current idol?

Can you point to an experience in worship where you felt satisfied and complete in the love and presence of God?

P R A Y

As a group, spend some time praying privately and together that the Lord would reveal the idols we've set up in our own hearts. Pray that he would give you opportunities to wait in hope and redirect your worship. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

T O G O

Colossians 3:1, 5

Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God... Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.