

Reading the Warning Labels
Series: The Story, chapter 15

January 26, 2014 Pastor Bill Bump

We know there are certain times we need to be warned that we're in a dangerous situation, and ignoring those warnings can lead to some devastating consequences.

The prophets were God's messengers who oftentimes warned the people of destruction that was coming if they didn't change and do something different.

2 Chronicles 36:15-16 (NIV) The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

Idolatry became more and more prevalent in the culture.

1 Kings 16:29-30 (NIV) In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him.

God sends Elijah, the prophet, to Ahab with a message:

1 Kings 17:1 (NIV) Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."

God takes idolatry very seriously.

Questions to ask that will help us identify our idols in 2014:

1. What are you most disappointed with right now?
2. What do you sacrifice your time and money for?

Matthew 6:21 (NIV) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

3. What do you worry about?
4. Whose applause do you long for?

An idol is anything or anyone other than God that takes the passion, value, hope, glory, commitment of your life. An idol is a cheap substitute for God.

Back to our story of Elijah and his battle with the prophets of Baal:

Baal was thought of as the god of weather. They are worshipping the god of rain, and God says, "I'm going to withhold the rain."

When God is not on the throne of our hearts, things are out of order and life doesn't work the way it

should.

1 Kings 18:19-21 (NIV) [Elijah said,] ¹⁹“Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

²⁰So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. ²¹Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing.

The people said nothing because they wanted both. For many people, it’s not that they don’t want God in their lives; they just want God and something else.

Elijah gives the instructions:

1 Kings 18:25-28 (NIV) ²⁵Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” ²⁶So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

²⁷At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” ²⁸So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed.

1 Kings 18:36-39 (NIV) ³⁶At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. ³⁷Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

³⁸Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. ³⁹When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!”

Conclusion

Remember *The Story* is about the glory of God.

To help us understand the dangers of idolatry, we need to realize that idolatry is not just offensive to God; it is hurtful to God because God loves us.

We hurt God by allowing other things and other people to become more important than Him.

Heed the warning: There is nothing and there is no one that is to sit on the throne of our heart other than God.