

Chronicles of Diversity

Your leadership weekly



Addictive Idolatry

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One of the benefits of not being addicted to any sort of publishing calendar is that you can make changes to that schedule when you deem necessary and no one will ever know, unless you tell them. Alas, the secret is out. My only problem was how to make this change relate to the unity of the end of this series.

Throughout history many church leaders have taught that the human condition is primarily an idol factory. Even as Christians grow in grace, they are many times confronted with things and attitudes that take their focus off the things of God, and direct attentions elsewhere.

Many years ago I received a copy of a monthly magazine from a television ministry. One of the first lines of the feature article stated, "I have always prided myself on my humility." I'm completely serious! From that point the article did go on to mention pious acts that the minister performed, but needless to say, that ministry is no longer in the position to affect the lives of others in the way it once was positioned.

I also recall at the demise, many people remarking how they idolized that individual. I still hear similar statements today. Pastor Blank is such a great preacher, or teacher, or whatever. If it is not centered in the pastor, many times it is centered in the church, or in doctrine, the denomination, or in the moving of the Spirit. It is a thin line between admiration, or respect, and idolatry.

Moving, possibly outside the church, I have also seen people make idols of virtually every created thing, or thought. All idol making efforts on our parts stem from our own sinful flesh and can be only overcome by our effort and commitment to eliminate those desires, and then that is only possible with God's help, even if we do not acknowledge Him.

We all are born with a full spectrum of gifts, talents, weaknesses, and liabilities. All can be used by God for His glory. The question really is what will we do with them? Since God can use them for His

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glory, these blessings can be utilized for our growth and development through the choices we make. Wrong choices can lead to idolatry, of some person, place, thing, or personal attribute. If carried to the extreme, idolatry can lead to addiction.

When you think of addiction, you first think of illegal drugs. But many people forget to think that tobacco and alcohol are the legal drugs of choice to which many are addicted. Other addictions could be gambling, sex, pornography, money, power, sports, abusive behavior, and a whole menagerie of personal and societal problems.

Personally, being a strong willed individual, I could never be addicted to anything. Just like the fallen TV preacher, there by the grace of God alone, go I, and every person who has walked this earth. Too bad we really never take the time to think of that aspect of God's grace in our lives. This grace should be apparent in the holiest of saints, down to the worst of sinners. Sometimes, God puts obstacles in our life, to show us that many of the things we hold dear, really don't amount to what God considers our highest purpose.

Kayla Burt shared in the Sunday service, that the scar and the defibrillator she now carries near her right shoulder, are God's marks on her life, God has a better plan for her future than playing Division I women's basketball. Some day those marks will finally come into view and be developed through her life.

Shattered hopes and aspirations, many times it takes years and years for us to understand that God had a better plan for his kids, whether that be basketball, marriage, or that same gamut of daily continual choices we all make.

Probably all country singers at one time record a song about the perfect spouse of our dreams, the prayer on which God closed the door. Or perhaps the one, we wished He had closed, it was just we weren't capable to listen to His leading. When you play them backwards the songs show that life is really too important, and too valuable to leave only in our faulty hands.

Last week I had my final test at the Sports Medicine Clinic at the U of Dub. The x-ray showed a small bone spur at the painful spot on my shoulder. A left over reminder of stepping out of bed and hitting the spot on the telephone stand. It wasn't bad enough to do anything, except if I desired, get the area periodically injected with anti-inflammatory medications. At least I knew that it wasn't serious, and something I could live with.

On the way home I felt so excited, I stopped by the park, taped up my little finger, got out my new basketball and decided to shoot some hoops. After spending over a week learning how to tape my little finger to keep it in place, I was able to shoot completely without my pinkie coming out of joint. The Doctor had told me if I kept it taped most of the time for a couple of months the tendons might strengthen and shorten to the point that it would not pop out of joint continually.

Hallelujah! The shooting results showed many years of not being consistently able to shoot properly with my left hand, but I quickly realized just how much I missed those hours of my youth, shooting at the rim mounted on the garage.

Once the initial excitement wore off, it was time to see if I could make some improvement. I'll shoot some free throws. The first ten, well it has been a long time, the next ten, I made two. Then I made three in the next series, and in the final series seven out of ten. I don't want to press my luck, even if it doesn't matter that I don't believe in luck.

I then proceeded to do some more shooting, "God, this is really fun, I didn't realize how much I missed playing." Then it hit me, as my eyes focused on another jumper. Even though I could not see my face, I knew I would recognize the look. I had seen it many times, in people addicted to something. I had just received a basketball fix.

I began thanking God for His grace and understanding after all these years. It all became clear, the complex and long story of how I was not able to play basketball to the level of my natural giftedness, or even thought I could, was the result of a complex plan that God had for my life.

To bring this into country music, there was a girl too. Gail was her name. If we had stayed put, I would have married Gail, but Gail was not a strong enough personality, to help me control my ability and competitive nature, only God's grace and many years could do that.

If my dad had not moved us to a town where he thought the coach could help me get a basketball scholarship and we would have stayed put, the possibility would have been much greater for a free ride. For where we moved, the good basketball coach moved away, and the place we left, brought in the best coach I never had the opportunity to play for. Then it gets even more complicated.

God is awesome and the way he works out the minute details of our lives is something we can only be thankful for in this life. Gail married a guy named Jerry. This one a football player. I don't know what happened to them since college. But this I know, there is a whole lot of truth in those country songs. Finally, just like Garth Brooks I can sing, well not really like Garth Brooks, about "Unanswered Prayers." Then again, I love to sing too, I wonder?

From Wonder Springs

Gold Fever, is one of the strangest anomalies, given to man. For some years I had the opportunity to see this actual addiction in many people. Mention gold, or show them a little of that shiny metal, stating that there is more, "in them there hills" and all their rationality ceases. If it wasn't so absurd, it would not be so pathetic. It is like a chemical addiction affecting people who appear and act normally most of the time.

As we move toward the description of our future deep investing, we will develop golden opportunities, to allow us to provide an economic basis, that can not be found elsewhere in the worldly markets. While it is based on gold, it does not relate to Gold Fever, but to a solid underpinning of this investment that even national currencies no longer advocate. The world offers nothing but temporal riches and its idolatry and addictions, but banking on the providence of God is a greater investment than all the gold that remains in Fort Knox. But God owns all the gold in the hills as well as the cattle that graze the slopes.

Seeds for Prayer

Not only do I not believe in luck, I also do not believe in coincidence. With all this talk of Kayla and her heart problem, perhaps it is a good thing to understand the precious gift of this life we live.

I woke from a dream early this morning in which I was bounding from building to building like on a pogo stick except without the stick. When I tried to go back to sleep, I was having trouble getting my breath. It did not get any better and I eventually got up to watch some television. That didn't seem to help, so since I live alone, I called 911. They came and checked me out and my heart rate, blood pressure, breathing all other vital signs seem to be normal. They recommended that I see my doctor to see if he can find a cause. Please pray for this situation and that if there is something physically wrong that they would find it and be able to treat it successfully. Personally, I'm not so sure that this is a natural problem but some sort of spiritual attack. Thanks for your prayers.