life group study guide

May 10, 2015

Big People, Little God

Need Other People Less, Love Other People More
BIG IDEA:
"God's love is a costly love. It never takes the easy path away from relationships. Instead, it plots how to move towards other people. It thinks creatively of ways to surprise them with love."
READ: Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28
Commentary: Jesus moved the definition of righteousness past outward actions and toward internal motives. We understand this in the context of "bad things" (murder, adultery), but does the same litmus test apply to "good things," too? While love always expresses itself in beautiful actions, not all beautiful actions are expressions of love.
Q: Is this true? Why?
Q: What are some internal barriers that might keep you from truly loving other people?
Commentary: We *need* things in our lives. Not just surface things – I *need* a Starbucks coffee, I *need* a ride to the store, I *need* the Colts to draft an offensive lineman instead of another wide receiver – deep, formative things. Appetites, longings, desires, fears. Sin stole our identity. We're broken and need to be made whole. These foundational needs are often poison pills to truly loving others, because we're looking for what only God can provide in human relationships or things. With that definition of "need" in mind:
Q: What do you need from your relationship with your spouse?
Q: What do you need from your children?
Q: What do you need from your work?
Q: What do you need from your friendships?
Q: What do you need from your political ideology?
Q: What do you need from your finances?
Commentary: When I'm looking to someone besides God for the fulfillment of my base-level needs, I can't fully love them.
READ: Exodus 20:3
Q: Why do you think God made this the FIRST commandment?
Tim Keller: "The human heart takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them." Thus anything can be an idol and, really, everything has been an idol to one



person or another. The great deception of idols is we are prone to think that idols are only bad things. But evil is far more subtle than this. "We think that idols are bad things, but that is almost never the case. The greater the good, the more likely we are to expect that it can satisfy our deepest needs and hopes. Anything can serve as a counterfeit god, especially the very best things in life."

What then 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." If anything in all the world is more fundamental than God to your happiness, to your meaning in life, then that thing has become an idol.

Q: What "good things" have you allowed to become idols in your life?

Q: How do these idols keep you from loving well?

READ: Matthew 11:28-30

Commentary: You cannot love the people in your life from a position of need, you can only love them from a place of rest. Even long-term followers of Christ can find themselves restlessly looking for peace in all the wrong places. Sin, like a virus, overtakes even our best of intentions.

Q: Are you at rest? Why or why not?

Q: In what relationships do you find yourself restless?

Tchividjian: "According to Paul, real love is impossible without faith (Gal. 5:6). Faith is vertical (it's upward) – it's trusting that everything I need and long for I already have because of what Jesus has accomplished for me. Love, on the other hand, is horizontal (it's outward) – because Jesus has done everything for me (faith), I can now do everything for you without needing you to do anything for me (love)."

Q: If that is true, how does it change how we love those around us?

Q: What relationship comes to mind when you think of "needing less to love more?"

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