

PARADOX:

Finding Clarity in Life's Contradictions

Our lives are filled with apparent contradictions. We often say illogical things like, "Less is more," and "The only constant is change." Literally speaking, such statements can't be true, but deep down, we know they are right. And so it is with God sometimes.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah found God in life's paradoxes. He saw God as a garden flourishing in the desert, as a slave who is more powerful than his masters, and as a healer who is mortally wounded. Through his prophecies, Isaiah revealed a deeper reality about God that cuts through our apparent contradictions and points directly to our crucified savior, Jesus Christ. At The Story, we'll explore these deeper truths beginning Sunday, March 2, through Easter Sunday.

March 23, 2025 - Part 4 - Gold: Precious or Worthless?

Par-a-dox (*noun*) - A seemingly absurd or _____ statement or proposition which, when _____, may prove to be well founded or _____.

Instead of saying (as people often do) that "More wars and bloodshed have been carried out in the name of God than anything else," **why might it be more accurate to say that "More wars and bloodshed have been carried out in the name of GOLD than anything else?"**

How does the Bible offer a different valuation of gold than what we're used to? (See Psalm 19:10, Proverbs 3:13-14, and especially Ezekiel 7:19)

Isaiah 46:1-4 - Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low; their idols are borne by beasts of burden. The images that are carried about are burdensome, a burden for the weary. They stoop and bow down together; unable to rescue the burden, they themselves go off into captivity. "Listen to me, you descendants of Jacob, all the remnant of the people of Israel, you whom I have upheld since your birth, and have carried since you were born. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you... and I will rescue you.

What are the differences between false, pagan gods (Bel and Nebo) and Israel's God?

Isaiah 46:5-9, 12-13 - "With whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared? Some pour out gold from their bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it. They lift it to their shoulders and carry it; they set it up in its place, and there it stands. From that spot it cannot move. Even though someone cries out to it, it cannot answer; it cannot save them from their troubles. Remember this, keep it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me...Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are now far from my righteousness. I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel."

According to this passage, how can something as good and precious as gold become worthless garbage in an instant?

How does this same principle apply to other good things in our lives besides gold?

Let's clarify some important terms:

WHAT IS AN IDOL?

Anything that absorbs your _____ and _____ more than _____

WHAT IS IDOLATRY?

Anytime a _____ thing becomes your _____ thing

In the Ten Commandments, God's first warning to His people has to do with Idolatry:

Exodus 20:3 - "I am the Lord your God... you shall have no other gods before me."

Why is identifying and dealing with Idolatry such a tricky thing for most people?

Exodus 32:19-24 - When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. And he took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it. He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?" "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

What does this story show us about idolatry? How and why do people so easily fall into it? How did their idolatry affect the value of the gold they once possessed?

"At the heart of unbelief is the belief that God is not HOLY." - Jackie Hill Perry

What do we mean when we say "God is HOLY"? (see Isaiah 46:9, 1 Samuel 2:2, Psalm 99:9) How does belief in God's holiness protect us from falling prey to idolatry?

What "good" or "precious" thing have you made your "best" or "ultimate" thing? What can you change in order to keep life's "good" things in their place where they belong, and to exalt and serve God alone?



Serve with Loaves & Fishes This Week

Join us in serving hundreds of warm, fresh meals to Houston's homeless in downtown! Our next monthly opportunity is THIS Tuesday, March 25 from 8:30am to 12:30pm. Learn more and sign up: [thestory.church/events](https://www.thestorychurch.com/events)



Lenten Midweek Prayer

Join us on Wednesdays at 7pm (through April 16) in the Sanctuary to spend some time dwelling on Scripture and in prayer both individually and as a group. Come as you are and as you are able!



NEW! Hoops & Prayers (For 2nd-6th Grade)

Hoops & Prayers is a new sports outreach for children to learn basketball skills and drills while also learning how to pray! Meets every Sunday (starting March 23rd) from 12:30-2pm. Visit our website to learn more and register: [thestory.church/events](https://www.thestorychurch.com/events)