

SEDUCED SOUL

“Soul Detox” Series

Week 4

Good morning! My name is Doug Rendall & I’m one of the elders here at NP, and for today’s message we are finishing up our 4-week series called Soul Detox. Now, you’re probably wondering why Tim isn’t delivering this all-important message this week, and that’s because he got called away...to the Boundary Waters! <picture?>

So...the Title of today's message is The Seduced Soul. As we get into this message I want to just stop for a moment and say that sometimes the messages that we need to hear the most are the most difficult for us to acknowledge personally. And I think this is going to be one of those messages, which quite honestly, it's a message that might just be easy to just shake off, to brush off, to say, "Okay, that was good and everything, now let's go on with our lives."

What I want to do is beg you to ask God if there's something significant that He wants to show you, and that your hearts would be open to hear it. I want to pray because I really believe this is a weighty and important message...

Pray...

Now, why is this so important? If you missed the last few weeks, our key thought is this...

WE ARE NOT A BODY WITH A SOUL...WE ARE ACTUALLY A SOUL WITH A BODY.

And that may take a minute to sink in but it's rather important. Whenever we die, our bodies die, but technically *we* don't die, we continue to live. *We* - the 'me' inside, or the 'you' inside, are actually not a body...our body is a house for who *we* are... we are really a soul...inside a body.

A lot of times we talk about detoxing our bodies... which I think is important on occasion ...but we have been talking about having a soul detox. Taking care of what will last for eternity – our soul.

Today, I want to finish this series by talking about detoxing from the things that seduce our soul – those things that perhaps ever so subtly draw us away from our God – those things that He himself calls idols.

In a couple of weeks Tim is going to do a whole series on the Ten Commandments, but today I want you to just look at the very first one. Now you’d think that the very first commandment that God gives to us on His top-10 list would be mighty important, right?

Trivia question: we all could name at least 1 or more of the 10 commandments, but where would we turn in the Bible to find that whole list? Anyone?

Exodus 20:3-4, the very first commandment that God lists out for His people is... **“You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything, nothing at all in heaven above or the earth beneath or in the waters below.”**

So why would God command this one first? Might it be because our souls are so vulnerable to worshipping something? Yes...and why is that? Because our souls are created to worship, to connect with and worship the living God.

We are worshipers. Worship isn't just something that we do, we are created to worship. A worship leader by the name of Matt Redman came out with a song many years ago called Heart of Worship – you know the one, “I’m coming back to the heart of worship, & it’s all about you, it’s all about you Jesus”. In our hearts and our souls, we are worshippers.

But anytime our souls are filled with anything except God, we are seduced by, and worshipping, a counterfeit. In other words we are created to worship and if we are not worshipping God we are worshipping something other than God and that is our idol.

There’s another artist named Plumb who has a song called God-Shaped Hole – the chorus goes:

**There's a God-shaped hole in all of us
And the restless soul is searching
There's a God-shaped hole in all of us
And it's a void that only He can fill**

It’s a void that only He can **truly** fill, but we try so hard sometimes to fill that void with just about anything else we can find, don’t we – sex, drugs, rock & roll, entertainment, hobbies, tv, pornography, friends...even serving in the church can take the place of God in our lives sometimes!

And that's why so many of us can have our lives full of so many things and yet, we're empty on the inside because all the things of this world cannot satisfy the soul that was created to be satisfied by the One True God.

Here’s the deal, tho - the problem is many of us don’t even realize we are in a battle with the sin of idolatry. And the reason is because we're seduced into it and we cannot even see our idolatry...because it has cleverly seduced us. Just like some of the people in the OT, we've been seduced into worshipping a phony, only our idols today are vastly different from theirs.

Often we don’t see or recognize it. We've been seduced into elevating even what might be good things to become the supreme things in our life. And without even knowing it, we lift things above God in our own hearts. **We've got a seduced soul.**

What we need to do then, is to learn to :

A. IDENTIFY THE IDOLS OF OUR SOULS.

Here's the challenge...it is very easy to justify and rationalize and bring all sorts of excuses as to why certain things aren't idols. We are great excuse makers. But to identify your idols, ask yourself these 3 questions:

1. How do I spend my time? Look on your calendar and see what appointments and tasks and activities fill up your free time...or does even work fill up your every waking moment? Maybe work or the pursuit of money is your idol. Maybe it's sports or tv or movies. Do you spend most of your time working on your house or car or some hobby? Do we spend every waking moment on Facebook or Twitter or Pinterest or just the internet in general? Do we measure our worth with how many people we've friended or how many have liked our posts? Question: have we "friended" God, and does He "like" our comments?

Maybe it's your children's sports or hobbies. Not that there's anything wrong with any of this, especially spending time with our kids, but do we take that to the extreme? Do we only come to church if our kid's – or OUR – activities don't conflict with that? Our kids notice those things – they notice how we spend our time – they learn from our example. What are we teaching them when we're ok missing church to attend their ball games on a regular basis? Sometimes we may think that missing church is no big deal, but...

Heb 10: 23-25 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

2. How do I spend my money? Look at your checkbook or your budget – where is your money going? Other than necessities, what are you spending your money on? Is it God, or helping others, or is it worldly pursuits? Is it all about you, your tan, your look, your facial, your wardrobe? Are we spending money on addictions...drugs, alcohol, pornography, shopping, gambling...what is it? Or maybe we just worship money itself...we're all familiar with the scripture that proclaims that we cannot serve both God and money.

3. What do I talk about? do your conversations mostly tend to lean towards Godly subjects...or again, is it sports, tv, movies, fashion, hobbies, or even gossip or hurtful speech? Start to notice where our conversations go even when we're in the lobby here at church! Are we discussing each other's needs and hurts, praying for each other, talking about the sermon and what God's doing in our lives, or is it just casual things like we'd talk about at work? Perhaps especially at church we can heed the words of **Eph 4:29: Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.**

So, by answering those 3 questions, we should be able to come up with at least 1 or more idols that separate us from God. So this is what I want us to do: take a good hard look at your life and be really honest. Talk about this with your spouse, your mentor, your accountability partner, your close friends, your family, your Growth Group, and really talk about what, or even who, it is that you're putting ahead of God?

Identify & name your idols. Here's an example from my own life that I've had to look at: a month or so ago in our small group, our conversation got onto tv, and we all agreed what a time-waster it was. So,

it's one thing to just agree that something is pulling our time away from God, but we need to name our idol...and remember, we may not consciously think that we are actually bowing down and worshipping something, but if it's taking us away from God, it's an idol. So, one member of the small group acknowledged that watching tv was a waste of time, so he said that he and his wife had decided on only 2 tv shows that they would watch regularly, so that was only 2 hours a week that they were spending on tv. Well, that got me to thinking! Remember a couple weeks ago I mentioned that I was going to cancel my cable tv package but I could still get all the tv shows that I had been watching for free via other means? Well, I have cancelled that expensive package, but I had to make a list of those shows that I watched so that I could keep tabs on them, and...here's my confession: My list included 13 hour-long shows and 2 or 3 other half-hour shows! So that's like 2 hours a night, 7 days a week, which may sound like a lot to some of you, but very little to others.

In fact, the AVERAGE American, says the surveys, watches a whopping FIVE hours of tv PER NIGHT – even more as we get older! So, I'm still not excusing my measly 2 hours a night – that's still a lot of quality time that's wasted just staring at the tv! So there, I've named 1 idol – something I need to look at to see if it's taking away from my relationship with God. I'm sure there are other more serious things standing between me and God as well that I need to address.

So, I ask you, me, all of us, to pray, to really take a very humble and sincere stance before God and say, "God, what is it? Where have I been seduced in my soul and I don't even see it?"

Once you identify what thing or things could be an idol in your life – things that have "seduced your soul" – Scripture teaches us to:

B. TEAR DOWN OUR IDOLS.

GOD DOESN'T ASK US TO MANAGE OUR IDOLS, BUT TO TEAR THEM DOWN.

We're talking about getting rid of anything that is more important to you than the One True God. And that's what God told Gideon in **Judges 6:25**, when the people were worshipping all of these false gods and bowing down to the idols, God said to him, **"Tear down your father's altar to Baal, the false god, and cut down the Asherah pole beside it."**

So without any hesitation, Gideon did as he was told, even enlisting the help of some friends, ripping down those idols that were standing between the people and God. So that's what we need to do, just get angry & get busy tearing down anything that stands between us and God. And again, enlist the help of your friends if need be, either to identify these idols in the first place or to help you get rid of them. Especially if there's an addiction involved, such as drinking or drugs or pornography or the like, you almost always need the help of loving friends and family to get rid of these idols once & for all, because if you just try to manage it, it will continue to seduce your soul. Sometimes you might just have to look your idols straight in the eye and let them know it's time to go. Just stare them down and give them this ultimatum if you must: We're not gonna take it...no, we're not gonna take it...we're not gonna take it...anymore!

OK, so that's a song, but we've got to take this that seriously! Don't stand for ANY idol coming between you and God ANYMORE! And this could be very tough for some of us because it means a huge life change...not just a small tweak.

- It could be your kid's **sports**, or your sports, if it's taking you away from God or church or your family.
- It could be giving up **drinking**, or giving up **drugs**. I was just talking to someone the other day who called me up, and he said he's had to give up his best friend, because all he was about was drugs & alcohol, and he just didn't need that temptation in his life anymore – he decided enough was enough, he wasn't gonna take it anymore!
- Or it could be the **career** if that's taking you away from your spouse and kids...and God! I have a friend who became a multi-millionaire by working day & night at his career for many years...but it cost him his marriage, and 1 of his kids wants nothing to do with him to this day. Was that worth it??
- It could be giving up **TV** altogether, or cancelling your **internet** service because it's just too much of a temptation to go places and see things you shouldn't be, or at least installing some kind of filter that you then have an accountability partner monitor for you.

Far too often we've been seduced into worshiping a counterfeit...something that never satisfies. And so, we wonder why our lives are so full and our souls are so empty.

Through all of this, this rooting of idols out of our lives, *please* understand that God loves us! When He asks us to tear down our idols, it's not because He doesn't want us to enjoy life or have nice things or to be happy...NO...the reason to tear these things down is because **HE WANTS US TO EXPERIENCE HIM to the fullest, and to have a deep & personal relationship with Him! And that's just simply not possible if we have other things in our life that's taking precedence over him, crowding him out!** Really, he doesn't mind if we have nice things... as long as those nice things don't have us!

He's going to ask us to tear down anything in our hearts and lives that are more important to us than Him. So, I don't know what it would mean for you, but if there is something that is more important in your soul than the One True God, **IT'S TIME TO TEAR THAT THING DOWN!**

So once you've down that...torn down that idol or idols...and I'm not saying that this will just magically happen overnight ...what then? Well... now there's space in your soul...breathing room...and nothing standing between you and God. Remember that God-shaped hole we talked about? Guess what can fill that now?

C. FILL OUR SOULS WITH GOD... EXPERIENCE GOD!

Psalm 84:2, "I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the Lord. With my whole being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God."

I faint with longing to enter the courts of the Lord.

If we're not using this kind of language for our God, or these kind of feelings for God, our soul has been poisoned by false idols. Our soul should cry out for the Living God because He is the only One who satisfies.

Jesus tells us in **Matt 5:6: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**

If your life feels empty, then you're filling it with the things of this world, because you were not created for this world, you were created for the Kingdom of God and His glory, and your soul will never be satisfied by anything that this world has to offer. There's a God-shaped hole in all of us...that only he can fill!

Don't get seduced. Don't settle for anything less than God's best. In fact, some music is going to play in just a moment and I'm going to give you a chance to let your soul detox, to be honest and to look with integrity at anything that you might be placing before God. Let's close our eyes and bow our heads for a while, think about those things in your life that have been crowding God out of the picture, perhaps those addictions that always push themselves to the head position in your life, allowing you to do nothing else until they are satisfied, think of those time-wasters that keep you from a relationship with God, that keep you from praying, from reading his word, from just sitting quietly and communing with Him, from coming to church, from spending quality time with God's people, from enjoying the life to the fullest that he so desires for you! Think of everything else that he offers you the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control – do you have these fruits of the spirit in your life? What about the salvation, grace, & mercy that we're offered through Jesus Christ? We can't possibly have room for all these blessings in our life if we're instead filling our soul with the deadly toxins of this world. Root them out, dig them up, chase them out and make room for all the goodness that God had prepared for us! Again, with eyes closed, heads bowed, identify these false gods, these toxic behaviors and time-wasters that we've allowed to seduce our souls, and begin to take steps immediately and throughout the coming days to do a complete, and thorough Soul Detox.