

1 Samuel 5:8

Therefore they sent and gathered to themselves all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" And they answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried away to Gath." So they carried the ark of the God of Israel away.

This is one of many amazing stories in the bible. It talks of how the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant and they put it inside the temple of their false god. They would then leave and come back the next morning and find their false god (a statue) face down, bowing before the God of Israel, not once but twice. So they freaked out, plus God also gave them hemorrhoids and was killing them. You really have to read it starting in chapter 4 of I Samuel.

But what really got my attention was the fact that they knew that the God of Israel was a true and living God, yet they refused to worship Him as such. Rather they chose to get rid of this real God and hang onto their false god.

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But honestly, I don't think things are any different today. So many people hear the gospel, have the word of God quoted to them and even see miracles, yet they still choose to hang onto their false god and not turn to the living God.

Sure they may believe in God, just like the Philistines believed in God and witnessed firsthand the Hand of God upon them.

† **1 Samuel 5:6** *But the hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and He ravaged them and struck them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory.*

But we seem to think if someone just believes that they are saved. Well, according to the bible that's half right, but it's not just believing, but also repenting of your sins.

† **Mark 1:15** *and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

Even James says that it's more than just believing because even the demons believe in Jesus and tremble at His name.

† **James 2:19** *You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe-- and tremble!*

Just because you go forward in a church and repeat a prayer does not mean you are saved. How do you know if you are or not? Well one thing is, have you repented of your sins and believed in

Jesus and that His death on the cross paid for your sins and that He rose from the dead on the third day? Also, have you gotten rid your false gods that you have been clinging to all your life and truly turned to the Living God? A no answer to that may mean that you have not truly repented of your sins.

You know that living with that guy or girl outside of marriage is wrong, yet you hold onto that false god and ignore what the Living God says.

You go out and party and drink all the time, even though you know it's wrong, yet you choose to hold onto that false god and ignore the Living God.

You have been cheating and stealing from your job or from people all your life, you know it's wrong, yet you choose to hold onto that false god and refuse to turn to the Living God.

We can go on and on, but the question we all need to ask ourselves is, "What am I holding onto that I know is wrong? Sure I believe in God and Jesus, yet I have put this false god before Him."

† **Luke 14:25-27** *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."*

It may be a person, or a thing, or a job, or a thought that you keep feeding.

† **1 John 1:6 (MSG)** *If we claim that we experience a shared life with him and continue to stumble around in the dark, we're obviously lying through our teeth—we're not living what we claim.*

Sure, we all stumble once in a while, but when you stumble you don't keep going back to that same spot so you will stumble again. An example would be that some of you are runners or joggers or you just take walks everyday along a path. Now when you first started on that path and a rock caused you to stumble, you noted where that rock was so that every time you are on that same path, you avoid the rock.

Take that same example and think of the rock as a false god, if you are honest with yourself you know where that false god is and how it causes you to stumble. So you can continue to keep stumbling or you can choose to avoid that false god (rock) and enjoy a smoother walk with the Lord.

† **Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG)** *"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."*