

SG Q Isaiah 44

1. Read Isaiah 44.12-17. Although Isaiah and other prophets often just declare practices as wrong before God, consider Isaiah's different approach here. What does he accomplish with this descriptive account of idolatry? How does this approach both affirm the goodness of creation and yet show the betrayal of idolatry?
2. How are you an ironsmith and a carpenter, fashioning idols for yourself? (Review Eze 14.6-8 and 1 Cor 10, if you need to review the transition from external tangible idols to internal abstract ones.) What are the desires that you find unmet (Is 44.17) with God or difficult to find God meeting? What are the things you turn to find satisfaction for these desires?
3. How does 44.12-20 show us both the unfaithfulness and the futility of idols? How do idols not deliver in the end? How can idols be harmful to us? How are idols adulterous? How can you expand this quote to feel the deepest impact of idolatry as grieving God's heart?
 - a. "The principal image in common use by the prophets for the elucidation of idolatry is the relationship between husband and wife, in which Israel is compared to the wife and God to the husband. The power of this image derives from the exclusivity of that relationship, which forbids the wife to have sexual relations with any other man; thus, analogy, Israel is forbidden to worship other gods. In this respect the image captures the uniqueness of the biblical religion: God unlike the pagan gods is a jealous God who forbids the worship of other gods. According to this metaphor idolatry is a sexual sin; even in the early strata of the Bible idolatry is identified as such: "You must not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for they will lust after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and invite you, and you will eat of their sacrifices." Idolatry, by Halbertal and Margalit, p.11.
4. Consider how to apply 44.1-5 and 22-23 to see and feel God's desire to exclusively meet our needs, desires, hopes in a loving covenant relationship with Him. What over places in scripture can you turn to do this? Spend some time pressing this home for each. Have everyone in the group find one passage or verse to hang on to this week as a testimony that God can meet our deepest desires and needs.
5. Pray for each other to see the beauty of the Lord and how far he has gone to "court" and "engage" us to himself as His bride.