

Week 24
6/13/13

Betty: Thank you so much for joining us on *LIFE Today*. I'm Betty Robison and this is James.

James: And we've got an author of a book called *God's at War*. His name is Kyle Idleman, Southeast Christian Church in the Louisville area. It is a great church. Pastor Stone is a great man of God.

I love you, pastor, love your family, love what you stand for. And I like this pastor that is really being effective in your church, Kyle Idleman.

He wrote a book called *Not a Fan*; Jesus asked for far more than a fan. Now a book *God's at War*. Max Lucado writes on the cover, "Kyle knows where we live and where we could live with God's help."

Would you welcome Kyle Idleman to *LIFE Today*?

Kyle, good to see you.

Kyle: Glad to be here.

James: All right. The title, *God's at War*. What does that imply?

Kyle: Well, as I taught through *Not a Fan*, when I talked to Christians in churches around the country, I realized there are a lot of people who have a deep desire to follow Christ; they really want to do that but their life is not aligned around following Jesus. I think all of us can relate to that. Our lives are not aligned financially or time wise around following Him. So we really want to follow him with all of our hearts, pretty difficult to do when we're being pulled in a different direction.

As I thought through this, I just realized the biblical word for this is idolatry; it is putting something or someone in the place of God in our lives. So *God's at War* is this truth that there is a war taking place whether we realize it or not, which is the most dangerous kind of war, when it is taking place and we don't know it. There is a war that is taking place for our hearts. Our hearts are the battleground. And a lot of the sin

that we struggle with, a lot of the hopelessness that we deal with comes from having the wrong god on the throne of our hearts. Until the Lord God takes his rightful place we're going to continue to struggle, we're going to continue to be discouraged because we're putting our hope in the wrong thing.

So really, it is a call to putting God in his rightful place and to recognize that he has never had more competition. Idolatry seems a little bit antiquated, a little bit irrelevant; it seems like it's something for back then but it's never been more relevant than it is right now. So it is a call to put God back on the throne of our hearts.

James: When we have an idol, when you put anything -- and an idol would be anything you put before God, whether you do it unwittingly or very deliberately, whether it happens subtly. Once something gets between you and God or put before God it is an idol. Now it can totally capture your heart or it can just be, so to speak, an inconvenient distraction or an unhealthy attraction.

But what happens, and this is so amazing what Paul points out, that if we have an idol, we're sharers with demons. We are actually interacting in a spiritual world of darkness and deception so that then we are easy to be manipulated by the one who is crafty and cunning, a deceiver and a father of lies. It is easy for him to pull the strings of our heart. This is what I find happening to people. Their heart gets captured or distracted by something else and they find themselves defeated.

When I looked in your book here, I was quite amazed at how you broke it down. You broke it down into several parts: *God's at War*, Idolatry is the Issue, the Battleground of the Gods, a Jealous God, Calling All Gods. Then the second part was: The Temple of Pleasure, the God of Food, the God of Sex, the God of Entertainment. Then the Temple of Power: The God of Success, the God of Money, the God of Achievement.

By the way, I think you did a marvelous job breaking this out. Even in the way you subdivided it.

And then the Temple of Love: The God of Romance, the God of Family, and the God of Me.

Well, it is easy for us to understand we can put me ahead of God and everything else. What do you mean the god of family? What are you implying there?

Kyle: Well, some of God's greatest gifts are his greatest competition. In other words, the gifts that he gives us can become a test of our faithfulness. A great example of this

with family is Abraham and Isaac. So it is not that we don't love our families with all of our hearts, it is that we love God first and our love for our families comes out of our love for God. You see this a lot with parents right now. I know how easy it is in our home where the homes can become child-centered homes; it is about the kid or it is all about the marriage. And we have good intentions because we're trying to love our families the right way, but it doesn't work. It only works when God is at the foundation.

James: You can put the kid God gave you ahead of the God that gave it to you.

Kyle: We replace the giver with the gift that he gave us. What's interesting is I see this as a father. Like if I give my child -- let's say I just gave my eight-year-old son a gaming system. He loves playing this thing; right? So he's always wanting to be on it. But if I invite him to go out for a fun dad/son night and he wants to play his gaming system or if I say, "Hey buddy, you want to go outside and shoot some baskets?" But no, he wants to play his gaming system. Well, at some point the gift that I gave him is pulling his heart away from the giver of the gift, and that oftentimes happens with God's good gifts. He gives it to us and then what he gave us becomes his primary competition.

One of the things I sometimes have done and seen in my life and I've talked to other people who get caught up in this is we ask God to bless what we are replacing him with. If you think of Elijah where God in those days he said, "Look, there's going to be a drought."

Well, why was there a drought? Because the people were worshipping the false god of Baal; this is the god of rain and weather. So God withholds his blessing in the area that had replaced him. I think we see this today as well. We want God to bless these areas of our lives and then we're surprised when he doesn't do it. Well, why would he bless his primary competition? So we put God first. We make him central in our lives and it is out of that that our relationships, family or otherwise work the best.

James: Well, we made a god out of money and a god out of success, and now then we're failing economically. As a matter of fact, our leaders don't even know how to manage their money. Isn't it incredible? And we keep sending them up there and they keep collecting more of it. But they're only collecting some of it from some of the people. Everybody doesn't want to have a part in supporting what they say is so essential but they expect a few to and then they teach people to hate them. That's when you make a god out of something and people who have been successful are greedy

and only think about themselves or they think well, "I gave it to the government, so that dismisses me from my responsibility." All of the sudden it all begins to backfire.

Every time we put something before God, the God who gives us freedom and the truth to understand what it takes to be free is the same God that's essential to be God in order for us to live with the blessings of freedom. That's basically what I hear you saying here. That we've got to have God in first place period or whatever else is in first place eats like a cancer, it is like locusts consuming all the blessings of the land.

Kyle: Every idol delivers the opposite of what it promises. So we think, I'll find satisfaction in this over here, and it ends up causing us to be more empty and lost than ever. You mentioned money. It is ironic to me that on our currency we have "In God we trust." And really, we don't.

We oftentimes put our trust in money. If you look at it this way, money is a good example where we ascribe to money divine attributes. In other words, we look for it to do what only God can do for us. So we say, "Look, if I have enough money I will be significant and I'll have my identity in that and I'll be able to solve my problems, I'll be secure."

But here's the thing. God wants to do those things for us. He wants to be our source of identity, our source of significance, our source of security. So the primary application that Jesus used when he taught on idolatry was money. You can't serve both God and money. It's going to be one or the other. We oftentimes will look to some cheap substitute to do for us what only God can do.

James: Yeah. And there isn't anything wrong with having money as long as money doesn't have you. That's the problem.

Betty: And the thing, I think as Christians that we don't recognize so many times is some of the good things that can be a distraction become a god; just like you referred to family, our children. Of course, we love our children -- we're going to care for our children. But if this relationship is not before the children, first and worked on, then we're not going to be the best parents we can be.

Kyle: I've always admired your marriage. It's been a great example to my wife and I, and I know that's true for many people in ministry. One of the things what I wrote in the book when I was dedicating it is I dedicated it to my wife. I said, "To my wife, you're a gift, you as a gift from God makes me love the giver all the more." And the more I see my wife as a gift from God, the more I love God. She's not God's

competition. I'm not looking to her to meet the needs that only God can meet. I'm not expecting my wife to be my source of joy. The joy of the Lord is my strength not the joy of my wife. But she's a great gift that God has given me and when I see her that way, I'm like, "God, you are so good!" And I love him and worship him all the more.

James: You talk about the God of entertainment. What are you referencing? What comes through your mind when you think of that?

Kyle: I take my daughter to an Indianapolis Colts game. She is a big N.F.L. fan. That's a couple hours away --

James: We used to like the Dallas Cowboys. You remember we used to have a football team here called the Dallas Cowboys? You have to go way back! Go ahead, let's hear about the Colts.

Kyle: So it is a Sunday afternoon where this game is going to take place and I take her up to Indianapolis early. We go to church at a local church there on Sunday morning and we go to worship and then we go to this Colts game. Well, she is a huge fan. She has me paint my face and we're chanting and yelling. I have no voice left.

James: Super dad! Way to go, Dad!

Kyle: So we have a great time. And on the way home it hits me, I've attended two worship services today. I went to church on Sunday morning and I went to a different temple for this N.F.L. game and I chanted and I cheered and I could tell you all about the different players. I was just convicted. Which worship was I most passionate about?

I really think in our culture today, entertainment and celebrity and these things, they're not just parallels for religion, they have become our religion in many ways. Not just a distraction but it's what we give our lives to, our time to, our energy to. And look, God's given us a gift in being able to be entertained -- absolutely! As a father, he wants us to enjoy these things. I'm still an N.F.L. fan; right? But I want to make sure my allegiance, my devotion, my commitment and my passion is to him first.

James: Now you talk in here about the god of sex in the same chapter where you talked about the god of entertainment. You're talking to a lot of young people. Is sex a big issue with all these young couples and people today?

Kyle: Yeah, I know it always has been but it continues to be a real problem. God again has given us a good gift -- a beautiful gift!

James: Good job, God! Good job!

Kyle: Absolutely, it's a beautiful gift from God. But when this good gift becomes a god it again delivers the opposite of what God wanted it to do. So God gives us this gift to create intimacy. But when it becomes a god, it causes us loneliness and isolation. God gave us this gift for pleasure, to draw husband and wife closer together but when we make it a god, it causes conflict and fighting and bitterness. So I talk to couples all the time where they have made this a god. And I've talked to young guys especially, increasingly so, where this has become a form of worship.

James: Basically, all consuming for a lot? Is that not so?

Kyle: Yes. And what's interesting is that if they can see it that way, there is a freedom they start to find. Here's what I mean by that. If someone comes to me, a young man comes to me and says, "Look, I'm struggling with lust and pornography." They'll say, "I've tried everything." I hear that often. "I've got a filter on my computer and I've got some accountability partners over here but I just continue to struggle with this. Why do I struggle with it?"

I think it is oftentimes because it is an issue of worship. In other words, they are choosing every day between Jesus and a naked image on a computer screen and they need to see it that way. So if they're feeling discouraged and they go into a pagan temple of Internet pornographic site to find comfort and to find companionship instead of going to Jesus first --

James: To find escape perhaps?

Kyle: To find escape or not allowing Jesus to be their greatest pleasure.

James: Don't you think it is important for people to see that when you're choosing between God and something else it is not necessarily God and garbage.

When Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Lovest thou me more than these." I don't think he was implying, "Peter, do you love me more than this junk or that awful stuff?" He meant more than anything that's ever attracted you or drawn you.

Don't you think a lot of times it's something that we've become very attracted to, perhaps in, involved, or even in some ways seemingly held captive and we really like it. It isn't like it is something ugly. So we have to decide... and this is tough -- I'm just asking you -- is this what you're finding where these young people or couples or whoever, has to choose between something that looks good and fun and exciting whatever, and God. And when they do that, when they put God first do they normally see something rather miraculous begin to happen?

Kyle: That's right because God loves us. He knows what's best for us. When we do things his way, and he is our priority, things start to make sense.

One of the ways I talk about it in the book is if you're getting dressed in the morning and you button your top button of your shirt and you get that one right, all the other buttons line up. It's not too difficult. But if you don't get the top button right the others are all... they're not aligned and you're messing with them and you have to do them and redo them. I see this to be true in our relationship with Christ. When God is in his rightful place and I get that top button right, then a lot of other things in life start to line up. But if that top button isn't right, it is a constant battle and it is a source of frustration I think because we're trying to deal with the symptoms instead of really dealing with what's at the heart of it.

James: If you think our viewers and people who go to the bookstore and get it or go online and get it or if you'd like to have it, it's God's at War, and they read it, do you think they'll find ways to begin to know how to overcome and deal with these idols?

Kyle: Absolutely. That needs to be the focus of idolatry. It is not just to get rid of idols, it is to choose Jesus. That Jesus is our great pleasure, that he is our security, that he is our identity. And if you studied scripture and you looked at idolatry, the word *choose* is closely connected to it. So that's really what this is a call to do. It is not just to remove idols, it is to replace them with what your heart is really longing for to begin with and that is Jesus Christ.

James: And that is what repentance is. Repentance is not just leaving something, it is not just turning from something but the prodigal did not just get out of a dirty, filthy, debased pig pen. That wouldn't have been enough. He went back to what was best. He went back to the father.

The truth is that if you find the best -- I promise you, when that prodigal went home it was better than he understood it to be before he went away from home -- went back to

the father. You replace it with the best. You're leaving the gods for the God and it is when he is first that everything else begins to fall in place.

Do you appreciate Kyle writing and helping deal with these issues we face?

Thank you, Kyle! We do something I know your church family loves to do, your pastor loves to do. We like to help people who have needs, legitimately help them. I don't like the way Pharaoh ever helps people in need because it always leads to bondage. That doesn't mean that powerful political systems can't do good things but not without a compassion connection, personal involvement. We are personally involved in meeting needs. It is what God says we're to do.

By the way, if you'll just do this and help us and you'd like to have this book, we're sending to everyone the incredible devotional book, *A Good Word for a Great Day*, and we'll gladly send you that. But if you'll just look at something right here -- I want you to look at this, and if you will touch someone with love who is in desperate, desperate need of love. Watch closely.

On the mission field:

Janice: Look at this little tiny hand. It looks like the hand of a newborn, but little Julia is a year and eight months old. She looks so much younger because she is so malnourished. Frankly, she may not even make it.

When you see a child this thin, her ribs showing, and what's on her face is her skin dying because there is no nutrition to keep her healthy. Every breath she takes is a struggle. It's a struggle to just stay alive at this point. Her little heartbeat, her little ribs, you can count them just by looking. Her legs are about the size of my thumb.

I've seen this so many times over the years but I'm tired of that and I know that the solution is simple. This is not a disease that we have to find a cure for. This is the basic necessities of life; everybody deserves the basic necessities of life. I know little Julia does. And so many children just like her are out there. You don't get the opportunity every day to save a life but today you have that opportunity.

Come here. Jesus, Lord, I just ask you in Jesus' name to let little Julia live. Let her grow up and have a life.

End of clip

In the studio

James: Oh, boy! And Janice is standing in the studio right here in front of me. She is our floor director; if you can get a shot of Janice standing there.

Janice, I want to thank you for holding that little Julia up close. You are a missionary.

And she prayed for Julia. And she pointed out that it is not a disease that we don't know the cure for, we do. It's just some food, some nourishment. And that's the last time anybody got to love that little girl. She's in the arms of the Lord Jesus right now, I promise you! Julia didn't make it. She was a precious little girl. Her little skin was literally scaling off from malnourishment but she is precious.

Betty: She was! And I know it's hard to watch scenes like this. You say, "Why doesn't someone do something?" You can. We can. We can make the difference. We don't have to watch this over and over again. We can help them. We can get the help to them. All they need is nourishment. That's a very simple solution. Please join with us and let's make that difference.

James: We found 25,000 children where Julia was that are starving because of a severe drought in regions of Angola. At the same time they're having floods on the other side of the continent in Mozambique and those people are in trouble too. But we've got 25,000 new children.

This is the last week, by the way, in this spring emphasis. Twice a year we ask you to help us feed hundreds of thousands of children. We have 400,000 we've located that we right now have organized to be fed and now we've got another 25,000 more that are right there where they started bringing children in like that that were dying while our missionaries were there just trying to see what needs we can meet. It doesn't have to happen. We can turn it around so fast in like a six month period. It is amazing what happens when you begin to stabilize things.

So what I'm asking you to do is go to the phone or go online and do it. I'm going to ask you to do something. I'm asking you to make a difference, to give them the cure that is sure to work, that is just to give them some food. And I want you to go to the phone, dial that number or go online. Take your bankcard and make the largest gift you can make. \$100 we can feed ten children for the next months. Would you do that? \$1,000 we can feed 100.

But now here's the beauty. We've got a matching challenge gift, a half million dollars, if you give right now that what you give, you give \$1,000 or you give \$100 or you give

\$50 or you give \$30, whatever, it will be doubled so that rather than feeding three children or five or ten it will automatically be doubled to 6, 10, and 20 -- 100 to 200.

We've got some wonderful gifts to send you to say thank you but you're giving the great gift of life, you're giving them a chance. You're giving other little Julias a chance not just to go be with Jesus but to see the love of Jesus, not in word only but in deed, in action. Would you dial that number? If you get a busy, you be determined, "I'm getting through. I'm going to give life. I'm going to share the love of God." Please make the gift God puts on your heart and I thank you for doing it!

Begin video clip:

Announcer: At this very moment children are drawing what could be their last breath, struggling to stay alive due to severe hunger. You can help stop the cycle of death. You can help save a child's life. In addition to the 400,000 children already in our feeding program throughout Africa, we must immediately provide for an additional 25,000 children in the hardest hit areas of drought.

As an answer to prayer, a group of *LIFE's* friends have set a \$500,000 matching challenge for Mission Feeding. This means your gift today can have a double impact. \$30 to help feed three children can be doubled to impact six children! \$50 to help feed five children can be doubled to help save 10 children! And \$100 for 10 children can be doubled to help feed and introduce Jesus to 20 children!

As a thank you, we would like to send you *A Good Word for a Great Day*, a 365-day devotional providing a word of inspiration and promise for each new day.

With your double impact gift of \$100 to help save the lives of 20 children, you may request *The Family Reading Bible* to help engage your children and grandchildren in God's Word.

Finally, please consider a double impact gift of \$1,000 to help save the lives of 200 children, and you may also request the 50th anniversary commemorative bronze, "Brotherly Love."

This is the last week. Please call, write, or make your gift online!

End of clip

On the mission field

>> I don't know if you can see just how long this line is. There are hundreds of kids, and they're lined up to get a bowl of food, which they get every day.

But I know, Betty, a prayer of yours too is that our line would be greater than their line. You know that we would run to get in line to say, "Pick me! I want to help. I want to do something." That's our prayer today. That just like these children are running to get in line to get a bowl of food, that you would also consider running in line right now and partnering with us, *LIFE Outreach* Mission Feeding program. This is where life begins and we get the chance to make that happen for them. Won't you join with me today?

In the studio

James: Betty and I just say thank you so much. Let's save all the little Julias, little Jims, precious children.

We're sending you *A Good Word for a Great Day*, *The Family Reading Bible*, the commemorative bronze, that is the 50th anniversary -- 50 years of ministry, 50 years of marriage. Thank you for staying with me! I know it is challenging a lot of times. That smile -- that wins me, that just melts my heart. Thank you so much for helping us.

Also, if you'd like to have Kyle's book, *God's at War*, we talked about today, you just help us save some little Julias. Give them a chance and if you'd like to have the book, we'll gladly send it to you. Would you say thanks to Kyle for joining us?

Kyle, God bless you, buddy! Give my regards to your wonderful church, Dr. Stone, all the family.

Thank all of you all over the world for helping us put God's arms around the world!