

Gospel Treason

What Happens When We Give Our Hearts to Idols

How Do I Look for Idols in My Heart?

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Oct. 7, 2012

An idol = **Anything** or **Anyone** that begins to **Capture** our **Hearts** and **Minds** and **Affections** more than God. It's living on substitutes. It's exchanging the one true living God for a counterfeit.

Romans 1:21-23, 25 "Because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man... they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator..."

Idolatry is really false worship. It's misplaced and misdirected worship.

"At the most basic level, idols are what we make out of the evidence for God within ourselves and in the world – if we do not want to face the face of God Himself in His majesty and holiness. Rather than look to the Creator and have to deal with His lordship, we orient our lives toward the creation, where we can be more free to control and shape our lives in our desired directions... However, since we were made to relate to God, but do not want to face Him, we forever inflate things in this world to religious proportions to fill the vacuum left by God's exclusion." **No God But God**, p. 32

Even good things become bad things when you allow them to morph into ultimate things – or reason for living.

"A woman commits adultery, and repents. She and her husband rebuild the marriage, painstakingly, patiently. Eight months later the man finds himself plagued with subtle suspiciousness. The wife senses it, and feels a bit like she lives under FBI surveillance. The husband is grieved by his suspiciousness, because he has no objective reasons for suspicion. 'I've forgiven her; we've rebuilt our marriage; we've never communicated better; why do I hold onto this mistrust?' What finally emerges is that he is willing to forgive the past, but he is attempting to control the future. His craving could be stated this way: 'I want to guarantee that betrayal never, ever happens again.' The very intensity of his craving starts to poison the relationship; it places him in the stance of continually evaluating and judging his wife, rather than loving her. What he wants cannot be guaranteed this side of heaven. He sees the point, sees his inordinate desire to ensure the future. But he bursts out, 'What's wrong with wanting my wife to love me? What's wrong with wanting her to remain faithful to our marriage?' Here is where this truth is so sweet. There is nothing wrong with the object of desire; there is everything wrong when it rules his life. The process of restoring that marriage took a long step forward as he grasped a lesson his Shepherd had for him." –**David Powlison**

Idolatry is not so much wanting the **wrong** thing, but wanting even good things **too** much.

Four Ways to track down idols in your life

I. Follow the Trail of Your Time, Money, and Affection

"Some of us attend the church on the corner, professing to worship the living God above all. Others, who rarely darken the church doors, would say worship isn't a part of their lives because they aren't 'religious.' But everybody has an altar. And every altar has a throne.

So how do you know where and what you worship? It's easy. You simply follow the trail of your time, your affection, your energy, your money, and your allegiance. At the end of that trail you'll find a throne; and whatever, or whomever, is on that throne is what's of highest value to you. On that throne is what you worship.

Sure, not too many of us walk around saying, 'I worship my stuff. I worship my job. I worship this pleasure. I worship her. I worship my body. I worship me!' But the trail never lies. We may say we value this thing or that thing more than any other, but the volume of our actions speaks louder than our words. In the end, our worship is more about what we do than what we say." *The Air I Breathe (Worship as a way of Life)*, Louie Giglio, pg. 10 & 11

Whenever a legitimate desire begins to morph into an idolatrous demand you'll start doing a number of the following things:

- a. **Sacrifice** for it
- b. **Spend Time** on it
- c. **Spend Money** on it
- d. **Talk** about it
Matt. 12:34 "... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"
- e. **Serve** it
- f. **Protect it** / defend it
- g. **Perfect it**
- h. **Think** about it
- i. **Build your schedule** around it
- j. **Worry** about it
- k. **Get Angry** when someone blocks you from it
- l. **Live in Fear** that you might lose it

One of the biggest indicators that a person or object is functioning as an idol in your life is that fear becomes one of the chief characteristics of your life.

II. Take Note of Your Heart During Suffering

Suffering exposes our idols.

No matter how long you've walked with the Lord, when you face deep disappointment and suffering, it pushes to the surface what's really going on in the heart.

You find out...

1. What you really love
2. What you really believe – not just what you say you believe
3. What you really run to as your ultimate security and greatest treasure

2 Corinthians 1:8-10 “⁸ For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. ⁹ Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, ¹⁰ who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us”

Don't just push through the pain when suffering, ask God to show you the idols that are squirming and screaming and being forced out of hiding.

III. Look for Chaos!

... because chaos and idolatry run hand in hand.

James 3:16 “For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there.”

If you have idols in the heart, you have chaos... to some degree or another. But it doesn't jump right out at you. We don't usually make that connection. Our sights are set somewhere else. Our first thought is that the people around us are just getting in our way and being so difficult and unreasonable.

“It's a serious mistake to engage in introspective 'idol hunts,' attempting to dig out and weigh every kink in the human soul. The Bible calls for a more straightforward form of self-examination: an outburst of anger invites reflection on what craving ruled the heart so that our repentance can be intelligent. The Bible's purposes are 'extrospective,' not introspective: to move toward God in repentant faith...”
- Dave Powlison

IV. Ask Some Heart Diagnostic Questions

1. Am I willing to sin to Get it?
2. Am I willing to sin if I think I'm going to Lose it?
3. Do I run to it for 'Refuge' instead of turning to God?

V. Repenting and Rejoicing is the Way to Get Free!

Colossians 3:1-5 NIV “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”

Idolatry is not just a failure to obey God, it's actually setting your whole heart on something besides God. So the solution has to be MORE than just repenting of your idol and using more willpower to try to live differently.

Satisfaction in Christ, delighting in Christ, and rejoicing in Christ is what keeps idols from taking root in your heart.

Rejoicing and repentance have to go together.

Repentance without rejoicing just leads to despair.

Rejoicing without repentance will just give you some shallow inspiration that'll never lead to lasting change