

Sunday Celebration (January 10, 2010)
"What You Don't Know ...is Hurting You"

Personal Idols (Pt. 1)

INTRO ... Being Unaware of What's In Us

New Series aimed at discovering and diagnosing the deeper issues in our lives that are making our Christian Lives DYSFUNCTIONAL!...The Realm of IDOLATRY...

"...overlooking idolatry makes us blind toward our own problems. Naiveté about idolatry in Christian experience is like the price paid by the city of Troy as its people happily opened their city gates to welcome the Trojan horse (filled with enemy soldiers). Idolatry can corrupt and distort any aspect of Christian thought and life, transforming it into something that is ruinous and death-dealing. It is this danger of idolatry—the blinding to our own problem—that is the concern of this book." Richard Keyes, "No God But God", p. 31

"This book is written for those of you who desire to live a godly life and yet find yourself in a recurrently disappointing struggle against habitual sin. This book is written for you who find yourself constantly tripping over the same bad habit, the same embarrassing weakness, the same sinful slavery that you hoped to be free of years ago. In this book you'll find that idolatry lies at the heart of every besetting sin that we struggle with." Elyse Fitzpatrick, "Idols of the Heart", p. 15

1. What is an Idol?

Ex 20:1-3 And God spoke all these words, saying, 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

"What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. ... A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living. An idol has such a controlling position

*in your heart that you can spend most of your passion and energy, you emotional and financial resources, on it without a second thought. It can be family and children, or career and making money, or achievement and critical acclaim, or saving 'face' and social standing. It can be a romantic relationship, peer approval, competence and skill, secure and comfortable circumstances, your beauty or your brains, a great political or social cause, your morality and virtue, or even success in the Christian ministry. When your meaning in life is to fix someone else's life, we may call it 'codependency' but it is really idolatry. An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, "If I have that, then I'll feel my life has meaning, then I'll know I have value, then I'll feel significant and secure." **Tim Keller**, "Counterfeit Gods", p. xvii.*

*"What happens when people who are instinctively and compulsively worshipers fail to worship God? We simply worship something else in His place. We get impressed by things, people, and experiences in creation. We get dazzled by idols." **Ted Tripp**, "Dazzle Your Teen", JBC, Summer 2005*

Rom 1:18-23, 25

*"Idols are false gods to which we attach ourselves for desired favors. ... Our idols help us to obtain what we want over against what God desires for us." **Lou Going**, "Modern Idolatry: Understanding and Overcoming the Attraction of Your Broken Cisterns", JBC, Spring 2002*

2. Unawareness is Common

*"We have, in effect, distanced ourselves from the whole idea of idolatry by pushing it out to the extreme cultural and psychological margins of life. ... If we do not understand the nature of idolatry, we will not be able to recognize it or guard against it in our own lives and communities." **Richard Keyes**, "No God But God", p. 30*

Mal 1:6-7 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'

Jer 7:1-4, 8-10

Ez 14:1-5

"In Ezekiel 14:3, God says about the elders of Israel, "These men have set up their idols in their hearts." Like us, the elders must have responded to this charge, "Idols? What idols? I don't see any idols." God was saying that the human heart takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them." Timothy Keller, "Counterfeit Gods", p. xiv

Jer 7:6 ... Spoke of God's people *"going after other gods to their own harm"*
Unawareness doesn't shield us from the harm

"If we try to make something finite fill the place that only God can fill, we will try to extract an unrealistic level of meaning from that idol. When it does not work, it invites us only to try harder. It should not surprise us in a deeply idolatrous society that books on codependency and addiction form a growth industry." Richard Keyes, "No God But God", p. 45

3. A Personal Idol Audit

How can we avoid the harm of functional idols? –1st we must identify the presence of functional idols in our lives.

Idol-Detecting Questions

- What do I not have in my life that, if I only had, I believe would make me happy?
- What do I now have, that, if taken away, would leave me unhappy or devastated?
- What do I have now that I spend a lot of time maintaining and struggling to keep?
- What is it that I now have in my life that I can't live without?

Categories for Consideration

- Idols of Insecurity/Fear of Man** ... Often finding yourself comparing yourself with others; frequently wondering what others think of you; being around people is complicated for you
- Idol of Approval/Acceptance**... you work hard at trying to get people to like you, to be drawn to you, to speak highly of you. You're very affected if you suspect someone doesn't like you. You are often "performing" to impress others.
- Idol of Image/Appearance** ... battle with your emotions over appearance related setbacks (bad hair, weight gain, etc.). Overly devoted to physical fitness, weight control, or style.
- Idol of Ease** ... battling with laziness and a lack of motivation or initiative. Avoid challenges and indulge sleep or inactivity.
- Idol of the Fear of Failure** ... You don't attempt things where you lack confidence.
- Idol of Materialism** ... have difficulties managing your desires for more/newer things and possessions. Often shopping or at minimum "window shopping" for more or newer stuff.

- Idol of Fun/Entertainment/Pleasure** ... Find yourself compromising biblical convictions in order to experience some thrill or form of entertainment. Living to go to the right event or party.
- Idols of Sexuality** ... addicted to pornography; giving yourself to sexual impurity; controlled by lust.
- Idols of Race** ... have an "over-loyalty" to your own race that accentuates your dissimilarities from other races rather than your similarities. Battle with ill feelings toward other races or nationalities.
- Idols of Magic/Rituals** ... involvement in superstitions, good luck charms, horoscopes, etc. in an attempt to influence your world.
- Idols of Pride/Significance...** you are eager to occupy an exalted position in the eyes of others. You are ambitious to be unique, significant, or to be noticed in the crowd. You are self-promoting. You often speak about yourself, your accomplishments, your family or other things that are associated with you or put you in a good light. May use name dropping techniques or "self-association". Eager to be known for something (athletics, appearance, success, position, wealth, comedian, bizarre styles, etc.)
- Idol of Control** ... Seek to control people and circumstances in your life. This may be observable through intimidation or anger or through guilt and emotional control. You are out of sorts when things are out of your control.
- Relational Idols** ... Unhealthy obsession with your spouse, children, friends, parents.
- Idol of Romanticism** ... an over-elevation of man/woman connection that demands too much from a future or current spouse.
- Idol of Addictive Pleasure** ... drugs, alcohol, gambling, over-eating, etc.

What Categories or Emotions in Your Life Would You Describe as Unhealthy and Possibly Under the Influence of Idolatry? (This will be noticeable by the presence of recurring conflicts, obsessive or fearful thoughts, preoccupation, vain imaginings, emotional weightiness, repeated need for counsel, topics of great interest in books and messages.)

- Career
- Money
- Food
- Relationship with your spouse
- Relationship with your children
- Relationship with your parents
- Relationships at work
- Friends
- Pursuit of a Spouse
- Desire for Children
- Entertainment
- Retirement
- Health Concerns
- Economy
- Anger
- Fear
- Demanding
- Easily Irritated
- Frequently Impatient
- Often consider yourself a victim
- Self-pity