

IDOL ARCHITECTURE

"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on you own passions." **Jam 4:1-3**

This Scripture in James offers some wonderfully insightful help when it comes to understanding how idolatry may be at work in our hearts. When it comes to our daily battle with sin, we are often more in touch with how sin is functioning on the surface of our lives, than we are aware of how idolatry is functioning in the motivational places of our heart. It is vitally important to not only understand what we are doing but why. What is my motivation when it comes to sinful pursuits? What do I want? (Remember: "People do...what they want to do.")

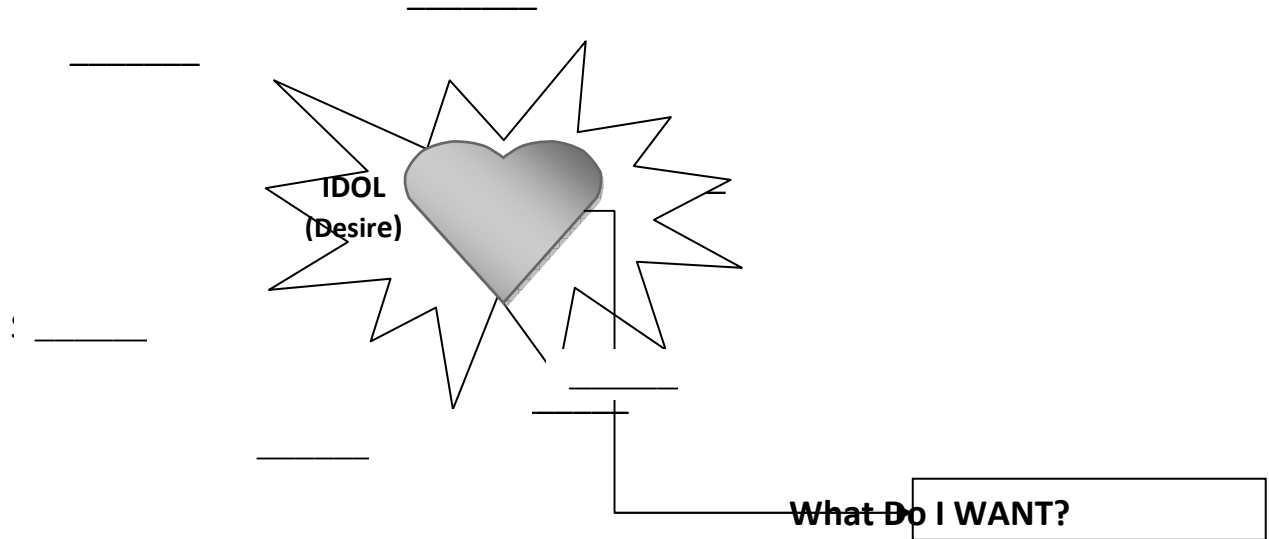
In the passage above the surface issues are "quarrels", "fights", "murder"... but the cause of these sins is "desire" and "passions" that are at war within. This passage is revealing how heart idolatry works.

"The heart is first corrupted, and then the outward manifestation of idol-worship follows..." **Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary**

If 'idolatry' is the characteristic and summary Old Testament word for our drift from God, then 'desires' is the characteristic and summary New Testament word for the same drift." **David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and 'Vanity Fair'"**

The model on the next 2 pages is intended to help make more clear how idolatrous desires are functioning in our hearts. Step 1 is to identify various sinful actions and attitudes that may frequent our lives and step 2 is aimed at exploring the cravings and desires that are in our hearts.

STEP 1: From the list at the bottom of the page, fill in the blanks below that represent your frequent and common sin issues.



Attitudes, Actions, & Strong Emotions

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Anger | Disorganization | Conflicts & Arguments (w/ spouse, children, friends, etc.) |
| Irritability | Sloppiness | Self-Pity/Victimization |
| Harsh | Gluttony | Depressed/Unhappy |
| Insensitive | Deceit | Complaining/Criticizing |
| Jealousy | Greedy | Work/career obsession |
| Fear | Prone to Money obsession | Vain Imagination |
| Control | Ungrateful | Argumentative |
| Gossip | Discontent | Contentious/Uncooperative |
| Slander | Name Dropping | Impatient |
| Impure Thoughts | Self-exalting/Self-promoting | Self-righteous |
| Vanity | Boastful | Rude |
| Intimidating | Prone to Exaggerate | Independent/Self-sufficient |
| Easily Intimidated | Disobedient to parents | |
| People Pleasing | Unsubmissive | |
| Procrastination | Sexually immoral | |
| Inactivity | Drunkness/drugs | |
| Laziness | | |

STEP 2: Consider what is going on in your heart, when you are experiencing the sinful behaviors identified in step 1. In these moments we are experiencing strong desires—we want something.

Idols of Desire – “What Do I Want?” (In any given aspect/circumstance of my life)

- ♥ Security/Safety
- ♥ Ease
- ♥ Physical Comfort
- ♥ Emotional Comfort
- ♥ Sensual Pleasure (pleasure through the senses – sight, touch, taste, etc.)
- ♥ Attention/Adoration/Appreciation of others
- ♥ Significance/Respect of others
- ♥ Acceptance/Approval of others
- ♥ Power/Status/ Position

Note: These categories may not be the best to describe your experience, so you may want to fill in one that makes more sense to you. Also, some heart motives cover a lot of territory:

Pride is a self-exalting and self-oriented idol that would include many of the issues above.

Materialism could be a desire that is based in a deeper desire for physical comfort, sensual pleasure, or power/status.

As you can see, this is not an exact science, but its value is in helping us to identify how idolatry is functioning in our desires.